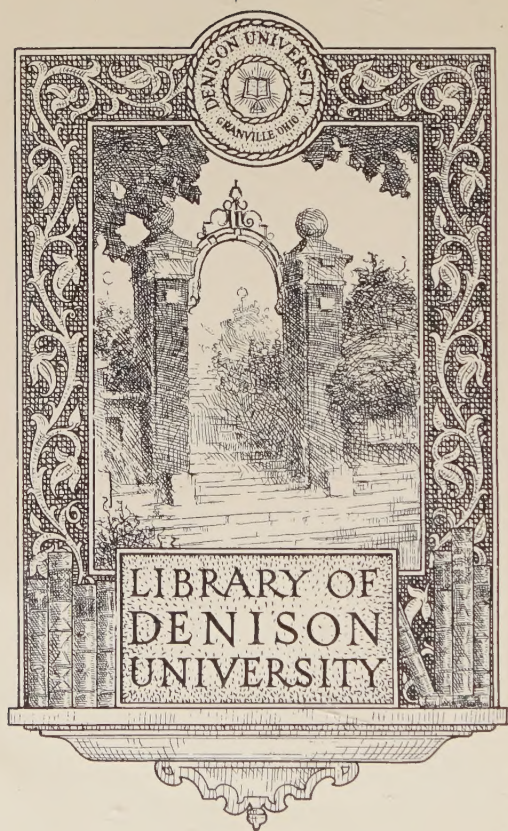




A horizontal scale bar labeled "MILES" with markings at 0, 10, 20, 30, and 40.



WITHDRAWN





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CORSICA

The Surprising Island



Mountain village on the way to Calvi

CORSICA

The Surprising Island

By HILDEGARDE HAWTHORNE

With Sixteen Photographs



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INTRODUCTORY REMARK

THERE is an inherent desire in most of us to share a find with others, and this book is the response to such a desire. We discovered Corsica, in a way, for ourselves, having known nothing and heard very little about it. We spent four months there, months crowded with new experiences and impressions, months removed from practically all the clutterings of modern existence, and we found those months good. Those who are made glad with scenic beauty, who can find delight in a people singularly unspoiled, curiously interesting, and in the remains of ages long passed, but here still vital, infinitely vivid and picturesque, will think the inconveniences of the island a small price to pay for the joy of knowing it. Beyond a doubt, Corsica is destined before very long to become a popular resort for tourists. Meanwhile it remains, for those to whom it appeals in its present almost untouched state, a unique and precious spot.

Oddly enough, being itself so entirely unmodern, it can be reached by that most modern of conveyances, the flying machine. A seaplane plies between Antibes, near Cannes, and Ajaccio, every pleasant day of the year, taking two hours for the one way trip. This is a better mode of transport than the steamers, which take all night. But any means is worth taking to reach this magnificent island, peopled when Rome was young with the ancestors

INTRODUCTORY REMARK

of its present race, glorious in scenery, romantic in legendary history.

Never mind though life be short, you who love what Corsica has to offer. Go there, and take your time to savor it. It is for you this book was written.

Santa Fe, New Mexico, June, 1926.

CORSICA

CHAPTER I

WE ARRIVE

CORSICA is not arranged for the ordinary tourist. It isn't a particularly comfortable place—indeed, Tennyson's line, "Comfort, comfort scorned of devils," applies admirably to the Corsican. Being himself a creature who eats sparingly and drinks moderately, who is cold in winter when the sun doesn't shine, parched in summer when it shines too much, whose house is bare of anything approaching modern conveniences, who lights himself to bed with a candle and perches his small towns in almost inaccessible spots, where often not even a mule cart can be driven, he does not understand the demands of the traveling public. This means that he ignores them.

Corsica is a bit of the Middle Ages impinging on our day. In a few places we found comfortable hotels, but very few. Running water, sanitation, electricity, street cleaning, bid these goodbye! In Ajaccio, where there is quite a tourist population during the winter, mostly English, there are several good hotels; there is one at Bastia, another at Piana—though to be sure, in those that have electric light, plumbing and heat, the plant is apt to go out of commission any evening, the running water to stop moving almost any moment, the central heat to be imperceptible. But the rooms are attractive,

there is some service, you can have a fire if you want it, and milk in your coffee. On the other hand some of the villages have not changed at all in five hundred years, and if you stop in them you will have to go to the *gendarmerie* for a bed.

No. If you want creature comforts Corsica is not the place for you. If you want a handy casino, jazz, if you need to be amused or to dance the night away, leave the island unvisited. One day a woman came to the *Hotel des Etrangers*, where we had settled in Ajaccio, and a most homey, pleasant place we found it, and asked if they had dancing there every evening. It was the week's sensation! Why, not even at the *Grand Hotel*, that extends quite hugely in a fine garden along the *Cours Granval*, where you pay a hundred francs a day for a delightful room, poor food and mediocre service, and that pretends to be extremely continental, not even there was there dancing. Ajaccio is modern, certainly, but if that sort of thing began, where would matters end? No, Madame, there was no dancing, no orchestra, no—yes, there were moving pictures in two places on the *Cours Napoleon*, if they would do!

But the woman had gone.

In fact, it is the absence of all that type of thing which is one of Corsica's charms. You find Corsica out of doors, and it is worth finding. It is a place of really amazing beauty, some of it of a wild grandeur. It is a fairyland of wild flowers and surely the sweetest-smelling spot in all the world. There is a single stretch of road leading out of Ajaccio along the sea front for some six or seven miles that during February, March

and April is so incredibly filled with perfume that we used to walk it in an intoxication, permeated with sweet odors, soaked in scents. Its wild hills are covered with *maquis*, or brush, and this growth is made up of innumerable varieties of scented plants and shrubs, whose very leaves are fragrant, whose bloom is honey. This wildness comes right to the edge of town—three miles out of the center of Ajaccio you find the traces of wild boar. The wind, blowing in from the salty Mediterranean and taking up this heady perfume is of an indescribable sweetness; it must be smelt to be appreciated!

The English have long made Ajaccio a refuge from the chill grey winters of their own island, and there are some French tourists, but if you speak English, be it as Yankee as you like, you are a Britisher to the islanders. Yet we found a great deal of resemblance between Corsica and America, and between Corsicans and Americans, for all the immense differences in the mode of life between the two, and despite the Corsicans' extreme reluctance to change the old for the new.

They aren't so much like our Easterners, or like our city dwellers, but get out west and you find the same attitude of mind, the same type of independence. Far west, too, you find the same scenery. There are bits of Corsica that took me right back to remembered places in Colorado, Montana and California, and that seemed quite as remote from human settlement.

And there are more general likenesses. For instance, the Corsican attitude to an unpopular law is just like our own. He ignores it, breaks it when he can, which is practically always, and trusts to public opinion, as

it expresses itself in the jury, to get him off—which it does. And politics is a business with him, as it is—or should I say was?—with us. He is in it for number one, and fairly cynical in his frankness. To see a group of Corsicans talking politics round a café table is to be plunged back to the small town of your state, let it be where it may. The same type of shrewd, intelligent face, the cigar in the corner of the mouth, the same amazing propensity for spitting, the same way of leaning close, hat pulled over one eye, to whisper in each other's ears and then to draw back with a look of triumph. Of course, in Corsica they still drink beer and the women don't vote.

"I'm not in favor of women voting," a young Corsican told me, when the island was busy electing deputies in the last general election. "It seems to me that woman's place is in the home. . ." yes, truly! Wasn't it lovely? Especially when you remember that the Corsican woman not only does all the work in the house but almost all outside it as well.

There are no thieves in Corsica.

I remember once talking to a man in New York, a man who came from Devils Lake, South Dakota. It was his first visit east.

"You must be a gang of robbers here," he growled. "Never leave your house without locking up. I'd be ashamed to look my neighbors in the face if I ever turned a key in my front door when I left home."

Well, it's that way in Corsica. You can journey anywhere on the island carrying treasure with you, you can drop things in the street, leave them lying around

your room with the door on the latch, and you never lose a penny's worth. Things you drop are returned to you, things you leave about remain untouched.

Then take hospitality. Here again Corsica and "That's where the West begins," march together. The shepherd who meets you on the hills asks you into his hut to share his bread of chestnut flour, his jug of goat's milk or pot of coffee, laced with eau-de-vie. He accepts your cigarette and talks, interested and at ease, of his own problems and the outside world from which you come, just as the prospector or the hunter in the Rockies or the Desert shares his cabin and his supper with you, swaps ideas and tobacco. To neither is it permissible to offer money. The Corsican shepherd or forester has the same sense of social equality that obtains with the western cowboy. His job is different from yours, possibly he hasn't cents to match with your dollars, but what of that?

We understand that attitude better than the British, some of whom attempt to patronize the Corsican peasant, and most of whom do not find it as easy to fraternize with anyone obviously not of their world as do we. So it is that, few as our visits have been,—and goodness knows maybe the fewness has something to do with it—we are better liked than the English, and it is really funny to see a Corsican unbend as soon as he finds out you are an American.

"Ah," he has said to us, joyously, "You are from Central America! Alors, then we understand each other!" And immediately he tells us the story of his life. As soon as we can interrupt we try to explain

that we are not from Central America but from the United States. But, since he knows his geography and is aware that our country lies between Canada and Mexico, what can be more central? Consequently, when we were not taken for English we were put down as Central Americans, or, up at the north end of the island, where American means South American, we were supposed to hail from there. And once a shepherd, with whom we sat an hour on a hill-top overlooking most of the southern end of the island, asked us whether French was the language of America, or had it a tongue of its own?

I suppose I could go on drawing parallels indefinitely. The Corsican bandit, a very real individual and existing in appreciable numbers, resembles the bad man of western legend. He never molests a woman nor interferes with a stranger. He is no common robber nor thug, but merely a man who is "wanted." He has taken to the *maquis* because he has placed himself outside the law, his fight is with the constituted authorities and his private enemies. The Friesekes told us about a bandit who came within their range while they were in Corsica. They had a villa near Isle Rousse, with a maid who daily came down from some mountain top to do for them, carrying a jar of goat's milk on her head. One evening they noticed gendarmes hanging about, armed to the teeth, and when she arrived next morning, asked what was up.

"They seek a bandit," she answered.

"D'you mean to say there's a bandit hanging round here?" The villa was quite outside the town on the

hillslope and completely isolated. "Suppose he should try to get into the house."

"But, Monsieur, if he should come here, you have only to give him something to eat. He is a most charming young man, and you will enjoy his conversation." She was astonished that there should be any question as to the proper behaviour toward bandits. It came out later that this pleasant young man had killed six or seven officers of the law, as well as one man against whom he had declared a vendetta. He didn't call at the villa, rather to the Friesekes' regret, and presently the gendarmes departed and the episode was ended.

The native population will not assist the law against a bandit. A Corsican will not inform against one of his countrymen, not even against his enemy. A Corsican jury will not condemn one, and if some gendarme does succeed in killing a bandit, he usually leaves the island immediately afterwards, to avoid the same fate.

As for the vendetta, it still flourishes, and is for all the world like a feud of the Kentucky or Tennessee mountains.

This much is certain, a woman can go alone at any time of the day or night from end to end of the island in perfect security. She will meet only courtesy and kindness of the finest sort.

We came to Corsica because we wanted sunshine. Paris had rained on us for three solid months, the Seine had flooded us out of our hotel, and it grew dark at three in the afternoon. We didn't want the Riviera, with

its crowds and noise. We didn't want Italy, reputed to be full of profiteering Germans. Where then?

Quite casually one friend remarked that he'd heard that Corsica had a better winter climate than Nice and was as quiet as a deserted farm in Maine.

That started us. And when we found that Thomas Cook and Son couldn't tell us anything, that there were no folders and booklets to be given away, and that no one seemed to know or go to Corsica, we decided it had exactly the qualities we wanted. It was then we discovered that the Friesekes had spent a winter there, and that in January he had painted nudes on the beach, in blazing sunlight.

"Corsica is the best place in the world," said Mrs. Frieseke.

Whereupon we bought tickets to Marseilles, from which one of the steamboats sailed twice a week to Ajaccio, a very poor boat serving an incredibly bad dinner, and at five o'clock of a mid-February morning docked at the capital city of the island—in a pouring rain!

So, under the familiar roofs of our umbrellas, we splashed about, finding our trunks standing in a puddle with a piece of torn tarpaulin over them, for there is not an inch of cover on the quays and then, under dripping palms, making our way to our hotel—not the Etrangers, which we discovered later, but the Solferino, on Ajaccio's sole business thoroughfare, a place of stone floors and vaulted stucco ceilings, chill and sunless, with an excellent table and practically nothing in the way of service, but clean—almost all Corsican hotels are clean.

"Ah yes, the weather makes very bad," said our host,

taking our streaming umbrellas. "But what will you? This is the season for rain."

We looked at each other. But we hadn't had anything to eat yet, and it seemed best to refrain from comment.

CHAPTER II

NAPOLEON'S HOME TOWN

FOR the following three days rain fell more or less intermittently upon us. It was too cold to stay inside the Solferino, so we explored Ajaccio with meticulous thoroughness. We loved it at once, and in our extended stay learned to love it better week after week, under its shining sun.

If twenty towns disputed the honor of being the birth-place of Homer the one that has the right to claim that of Napoleon Bonaparte takes the matter lightly enough. Which is a card for the pen as against the sword! The whole world knows that Napoleon was Corsican, but how many have heard that the name of his native city is Ajaccio? I hadn't, and I've asked quite a number since I found out, only to draw a blank each time.

Corsica is not large, not much longer and only a little broader than Long Island, but it is so continental in its structure, its lines are so bold, it is so divided from itself by mountain walls and precipices, by deep gorges, its shores are so cut into by fjords, so protected from approach on many sea-fronting miles by sheer cliffs and headlands, that four months are a mere introduction. As many years would leave one with plenty still to explore.

An observant person might even spend months in

Napoleon's home town without realizing the fact. No little boys run up to squeak "Show you the Napoleon house?" No sign points the way. There are two streets with his name, a little one in the older part of the city, and the main street, the Cours Napoleon, but then many French towns have a Rue Napoleon. There are also two statues of him, but you can study either quite awhile without guessing that the Little Corporal was the inspiration. The more important, placed at one of the sea-abutting corners of the town's one large square, the Place du Diamant, consists of a massive base of granite surmounted by five bronze figures larger than life. The center one rides a horse, the others stride afoot at each of the four corners. All are clad in Roman garments, all go with their backs to the town and their eyes set seaward, and they may or may not resemble the five Bonaparte brothers. The other statue is of white marble and represents a rather tall, slinky figure of a man, also in Roman robes, without even an approximate likeness to the Emperor. It is placed between four weakly lions who feebly spew tiny streams of water into bowls and, so to say, decorates the Avenue of the First Consul, a short, broad, palm bordered street that leads down to the Quai.

High up on the stucco walls of two or three houses, where you are least likely to see them, are appliqué marble slabs with inscriptions difficult to read at the distance they maintain. One slab informs you that within the house so marked Napoleon lay hidden several days while his countrymen sought to slay him; another that here a young girl opened her door and let him, a

young officer in the service of the French, slip through it to safety when he was being fired at in the street. On another is the statement that within its walls Napoleon read a letter supporting the native patriot Paoli.

By chance some day, taking one of the little picturesque streets that twist and wriggle through the old part of Ajaccio, close to the cathedral whose tower of pale yellow stucco in the Italian style of the XVI Century beautifully dominates the huddle of houses that cluster about it, you may find yourself in front of a plain, four-story building facing a tiny square not larger than an ordinary city backyard, planted with flowers and trees. Here too there is an inscription. It is the house where the town's mighty son was born.

We found our way to it one half-sunny, half-rainy morning and presently afterwards ran down the guardian, an old fellow with a white moustache and in shabby clothes who spoke with so strong a Corsican accent that it wasn't easy to understand his brief remarks. Most of the time he marched ahead in silence.

A neat, attractive apartment, the Napoleon suite, occupied the second floor. Plenty of light when the guardian pushes open the blinds, for the house is on a corner and the small square helps. The stucco walls and ceilings are faintly washed with color, and in the salon painted with figures and arabesques, in the Corsican manner; the mantle-pieces in one or two rooms are of white marble exquisitely carved. We were especially struck with the salon, a long, agreeable room with windows on the two long sides, one row giving on the street, the other on an inner terrace flush with that storey. A charming series of



The house where the island's mighty son was born

little gilt-framed mirrors with sconces hang on its walls, and there are several fine pieces of furniture, card tables and chairs with fiddle legs and the remains of brocade that must have been lovely when new. The furniture and decorations are not those of Napoleon's childhood, however, except for the famous couch on which he was born and a few minor articles, for the house was gutted by his enemies at the time he and his family were forced to flee from Corsica—a flight from which he never returned.

But his mother, Madame Letizia, came back to the house and lived there, refurnishing it to suit herself. She had taste, restraint and a sense of harmony, as the place reveals even now.

In the corner of a small chamber, tattered and shabby, stands the Sedan chair in which she was carried from the near-by cathedral when the imminent birth of her child forced her to leave the service. There was only time to put her on the couch, that stands today, as it did then, near the window of her bedroom, a graceful thing covered in faded green. The room is not large, almost square, with a wooden bed of fine shape, a large mirror framed in gilt, a couple of chairs and a small clothes press.

Two other rooms, still smaller, square, almost bare of furniture, are interesting, for these were the bed and work rooms of Napoleon when he returned for his vacations from school and garrison life. In the floor of one is a trap door that opens into a secret passage giving egress on another street in case of danger. And danger

enough there was in any Corsican city or village not only in Napoleon's time but for centuries before!

An amazingly peaceful little place, this home of the Bonapartes, with its softly hued walls, its windows with their gray shutters, its situation in the narrow street, hardly six feet in breadth, the shading trees of the small garden opposite.

Here the little Nabulio, as they called him, grew up. A frail baby, two of the three brothers who had preceded him dead in their cradles, his parents had only slight hopes of raising him. He was nearly two before, with a newly arrived sister, Marianne, he was taken to be baptized. The white marble font is still there in the cathedral, a graceful thing, and not far away, on a pillar, the words Napoleon uttered towards the end:

"If Paris proscribes me dead as she has proscribed me living, I wish to be buried beside my ancestors in the cathedral of Ajaccio."

It was on August 15, 1769, that the boy was born, the moment when Corsica was conquered from the Genoese by the French. There is no room here to go into the history of Corsica, but it is one of fierce and endless struggle by a proud and warlike people against foreign invasion and oppression. There had been centuries of this against the Genoese, who, sick of being burned by the flaming firebrand they had tried so long to hold, were almost as glad as the Corsicans themselves at the French success. In spite of the general feeling in Corsica that only under the protection of a friendly and powerful nation could they hope for anything approaching peace and prosperity, there was however a strong

party which believed that Corsica ought to be free and independent. At the head of this party was the patriot Pasqual Paoli, a man of true and unselfish greatness who might, with better fortune, have turned out the Washington of his country. Paoli and the Bonapartes were friends. After the final success of the French arms Paoli fled to England, and until matters settled a bit it was difficult for the families who had been devoted to him. The Bonapartes, Charles, Letizia and their nineteen months old son Joseph had to fly from Corte, in the heart of the mountains and make their way as best they might to Ajaccio. The going was very rough, and Letizia was only three months from the time of her confinement. At one spot she was almost drowned crossing a swollen stream, and the little party had to sleep out in the brush more than once.

Later, when Nabulio was sent to school on the Continent, he used to fight his French classmates in the cause of the family hero, still an exile in England, and swear that he would devote his life to doing all the harm he could to France. One of his school fellows made a caricature of the spindle-shanked little fellow striding along energetically, swinging a cane, with the inscription: "Bonaparte runs, flies to the aid of Paoli, in order to rescue him from the hands of his enemies."

Yet it was the Paolists who finally drove the Bonapartes off the island and did their best to kill Napoleon. But much water was to run under bridges before that.

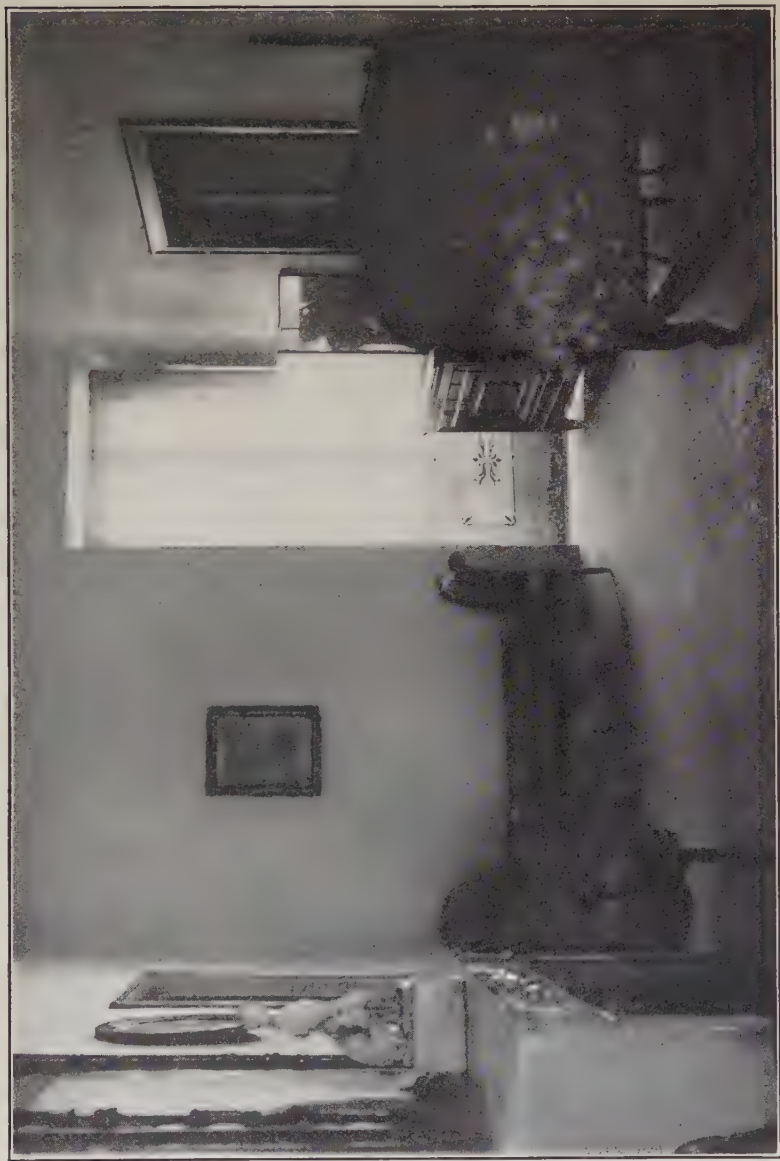
He was a silent, discontented child, quarrelsome and untruthful, accusing his older brother Joseph unjustly to his mother and bullying the younger children. There

were eight altogether, and Madame Letizia kept a severe eye and a strong hand upon them. Nabulio, stoutly smacked, would run to be consoled by his "mamuccia", his fostermother Camille Ilari, who would cuddle him in her arms, singing the sweet and sorrowful "lamenti" over him, the chants of the Corsican women over their dead.

Grown a little older Napoleon became leader in the fights between the boys of the two sections of the city. There was the old quarter, where his parents lived, together with all the better-to-do folk of the city, out on the small oblong peninsula that juts into the gulf, its extreme end occupied by the citadel, the rest a tangled web of tiny streets and alleys; and there was a later quarter, known as the Borgo, stretching northwards along the shore of the gulf, squeezed by the hills that begin almost from the edge of the water to mount steeply up, where lived the peasants, artisans, sailors and fishermen.

The constant warfare maintained between the boys of these two quarters culminated each Easter in regular pitched battles. Napoleon was no favorite with the boys of his own age, but they instinctively recognized his power. Under him they won for the first time against the rougher, sturdier crowd that had till then had the best of it. Once the young captain staged a retreat that brought the Borgo boys pelting to a cache of stones in a sand pile, when they were properly trounced.

Apparently he had a real love for the beauty and sweetness of the country round his native town. About a mile and a half along the shore drive that runs south-



The chamber, and the famous couch, where Napoleon was born

ward for some eight miles, skirting the bay to where, at the very end of the point, an ancient Genoese tower or *Parata* still looks sternly out to sea, there is a very old chapel, built by the little party of exiled Greeks who lived for a generation in Ajaccio, before founding the pretty town of Cargese, that remains today one of the lovely sights of Corsica. Eucalyptus trees surround the chapel and the sea reaches to its terraced foot. Here there is one more inscription, a quotation from brother Joseph's journal, relating how Napoleon would often come out here to play. A charming spot it is. As I have said, the world holds no other road so breathed upon by perfumes as that drive to the Parata. It curves along graciously, following the contours of the coast with its shores of tawny granite interspersed with silver-shining beaches. Beyond, in streaks of vivid turquoise, purple and indigo the water reaches to the mountains of the opposite shore, that stand like clear blue shadows against the paler sky, or are miraculous behind opaline haze. You walk through enchantment. On the land side rise the abrupt hills, a narrow cultivated strip of ground between with an occasional villa. Here gardens bloom, olives climb the slope, pine and almond and mimosa crowd, with ever and again a row of eucalyptus, bringing its own heady fragrance. Myrtle and cistus and cedar hedge the way a few miles out where the cultivation ceases and the wild *maquis*, or brush, begins. Every leaf is sweet or pungent. Lavender makes purple patches, the cistus is a shining gold and honey to the nose, or white and pink like wild roses. Mediterranean sage puts in its claim with a snap. And the color! Up-

sweeping meadows a solid sheet of gold and scarlet with great yellow daisies and poppies flaming, the pale purple of thistles, the snow of hawthorn, the dancing golden balls of the mimosa and acacias, the shouting magenta of rock plant.

And always the changing shadows of the sea and the mountains with their own perfumed breath, and the murmur of the little mountain brooks that drop from the heights, and the sighing of the little waves among the rocks.

No wonder that Napoleon, in the splendor of Fontainebleau itself, was haunted in his dreams by the remembered fragrance and beauty of his native land.

He was made an officer in the French army at sixteen and sent to a garrison town, but he came home on long leaves. Silent still, gloomy and hard-working, he bent over his books or practised with the artillery and proved himself a good marksman. As a child his supreme interest had been the soldiers, whose barracks he haunted. He wore a wooden sword and played on a passionately loved toy drum, and was successfully urged to study because that way he would become an officer. At school he cared only for mathematics and history. There was always the mark of his destiny upon him. His father, who died while he was still a boy, prophesied quite astoundingly that he would make kings tremble with his sword and change the face of the world.

In 1789, the year he was twenty, the Revolution began to make itself heard in France. It found ardent adherents in Corsica, heartily sick of the selfish mismanagement it had suffered under the Louis. Napoleon was for

it from the first and went about preaching it in his island. Paoli returned from England, having received an ovation in Paris, and the promises of the National Assembly that he should have the ordering of affairs in Corsica. Everyone was happy.

But, as usual, things didn't turn out as rosily as had been expected, and Corsica plunged into a new civil war. Paoli headed the patriot party, bent on secession, having three-fourths of his countrymen with him. Napoleon, believing that the only secure future for his country lay with France, was forced to separate from his boyhood hero. It was he who commanded the opposing forces. There were several scattered engagements, in all of which he lost; and, after escaping arrest in one place only by the narrowest margin, and barely saving his life more than once, he left the island on June 13, 1793, proscribed, defeated, with his family in hiding, his house sacked. He made a brief return the following year with a small squadron, took his mother and uncle and sisters aboard his own ship—they had been living in hiding, sheltered by devoted friends for many months—and waited in Ajaccio to see if his party would rally to his support. It made no movement, however, and he returned to France, never again to set foot on Corsica, but to begin his tremendous career.

One of the delights of Ajaccio is the fact that there is so little sight seeing to do. To be sure, in the museum of the City Hall, on the Avenue of the First Consul close to the Quai, there are two or three rooms containing relics of the Bonapartes, portraits, furniture of the period and the certificate of Napoleon's baptism, where

his name is spelled Napoleone. As far back as 1576, the family, already established in Corsica, used the spelling Bonaparte and both that spelling and Buonaparte appear on the document. Then, down the old Rue Fesch, named after the Cardinal, Napoleon's half-cousin, there is the marble tomb of the Bonaparte family, a chapel built by Napoleon III., who also presented the bronze family group on the square. Here lie the bodies of Madame Letizia "Mother of Kings," of the Cardinal, of sister Marianne, princess, the sister who had been baptized with her brother Napoleon, and of Charles Napoleon Bonaparte, behind black marble slabs in a small chamber under the floor of the chapel which is pierced by a circular opening in which hangs a lamp, illuminating the tombs.

In an hour at most you can saunter through every street of the town, nor has it changed much since the days when the little Nabulio fought the boys of the Borgo quarter in its narrow ways. To the south it has expanded in villas, hotels and schools, and there are some new buildings in the old parts, the quai too has been extended. A little grove with great boulders on the hill-slope to the south-west has been made into a pretty park, or grotto. It was a favorite place with Napoleon, who is said to have taken his books there to study. But he would not find Ajaccio as much altered since his day, could he come back to it, as the New Yorker finds his home city changed if he remains away a year.

The citadel was built in 1554 and lies behind a deep moat planted to green little vegetable gardens today, and high yellow walls that on the sea side sink into the water.

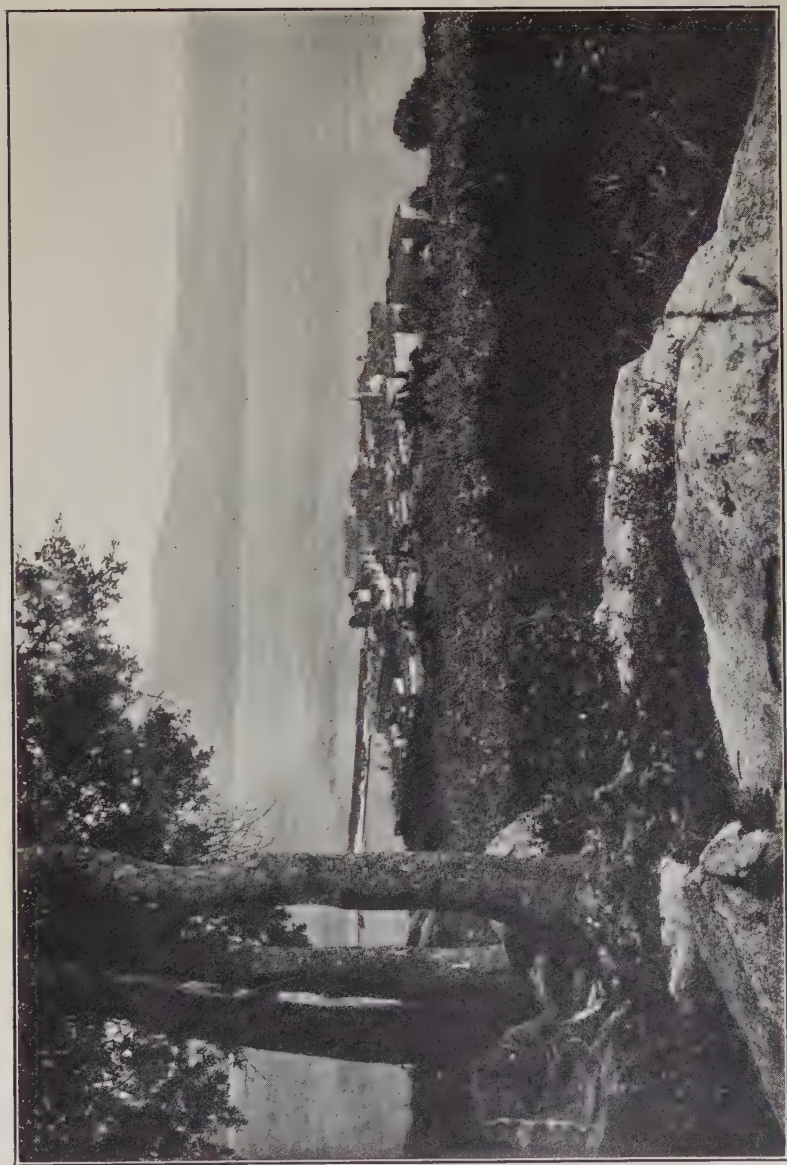
Soldiers are still quartered in it. From it you wander through the narrow streets of the oldest part of Ajaccio, much of it dating from 1492, when the city was removed from an earlier situation a mile or so north for sanitary reasons. Legend has it that it was originally founded by Ajax, and placed on one of the steep heights above the present town. Ancient remains of ruined walls are still to be traced there, and you can sit among the pale-flowered asphodels, look out to sea and down on the so much younger town beside it and easily believe that Ajax would have founded a city in just that spot.

Ajaccio is roughly in the form of a Y, the thick, stubby base being the peninsula, with one arm reaching north and one southwest along the narrow shelves left between water and hills. Through the northern arm runs the Cours Napoleon with its shops and cafés, the old barracks with their picturesque high steps, the newer Prefecture and Palais de Justice, and between the cours and the quai the older Rue Fesch, a narrow dirt street with cobble-stone gutters, bordered by shabby and quaint houses four, five and six stories high. Here are tiny shops and drink rooms marked by a bush where at night men sit shoulder to shoulder at a central oak table dark with age and stains, wine barrels behind them against the walls, wine in glasses before them, the whole lighted by a single smoky lamp. Rembrandt would have loved those interiors, loved too the half-wild heads with their flowing beards, their quick dark eyes, the dull tones of the brown corduroy clothes, the gleam of silver buttons and dusky scarlet of sashes wound many times about slim waists—for rare indeed is a fat Corsican!

The intersecting streets from the Cours Napoleon pitch sharply down through the Rue Fesch to the quai, some being mere flights of steps. The quai has two anchorages, separated by a jetty. Here the fishing boats with furled lateen sails lie along the coping, and so deep is the water that the steamers from the Continent range alongside with equal safety. Usually a few lovely sailing ships lie out a way, or come stately in with their tall masts burdened under canvas. Men mend their nets and women do their washing, and the markets, gay and busy in the morning, face along the quai. Most of the time it is a quiet, sleepy spot, and under the full moon, sweeping grandly up over the opposing hills, a magic one. Boats with muffled oars scull silently through the shimmering water, mere inky smears, a light from an anchored vessel twinkles on the faintly stirred surface, the lighthouse of the citadel swings its beam rhythmically. Leaning against a pile of lumber waiting to be shipped a young man sings an old love song in a warm baritone, repeating the refrain over and over.

Ajaccio is a place to absorb, rather than see. From the hills you look down on it, a pale gold agglomeration, with the cathedral tower rising beautifully over it, and it seems a fairy place. Within it you soon fall into easy, idling ways.

The Cours Napoleon enters the Place du Diamant at the point where the Avenue of the First Consul begins, and here at the corner is the Grand Café with its tables under an awning and its chairs usually filled with Ajacciens drinking their mild drinks, smoking, chatting and playing cards. In the sunny, dusty center of the square



From the hills you look down on Ajaccio, a pale gold agglomeration, a place to absorb rather than to see

children play, lively and pretty children, while on the benches that edge it, under the speckled shadow of the plane trees, sit old men and women who watch them or doze comfortably. Opposite is the Military Hospital and the Cours Granval leads away from the upper corner on that side with its villas, schools and hotels, and the huge unfinished Fesch College whose building was interrupted by the war. On the sea corner, just beyond the Bonaparte monument the drive to the Parata takes off.

All the life of the city passes here. Up the Avenue and along the Cours Napoleon come donkey carts drawn by small gray beasts apparently capable of carrying any load, and others with men or boys riding them. The peasant women in their sober black gowns, with black kerchiefs tied under the chin to fall to a point behind, pass back and forth, grave and pale, carrying on their heads, more often than not, great earthenware jars with a glazed green surface, full of water from one of the communal fountains, or huge bundles of clothes to be washed or a great bunch of faggots. Countless dogs scratch fleas or squabble, or rush barking after an automobile threading its way through the crowd. Toward evening the Cours Napoleon fills from side to side with young people who have been at work or in school during the day, the young men and the maidens walking in separate groups—charming girls, smartly dressed in the latest style and bright colors. Shepherds from the hills drift in, their corduroy coats hung cloakwise, their ancient patched velvet trousers stuffed into boot tops, broad-brimmed hats on their heads, to take seats and order a beer, a coffee, a vermouth with ice. There is a constant

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hum of voices, a shuffling of feet, a jingling of bells from the collars of the lively little horses drawing cabriolets, or mule-teams loaded with sacks of charcoal.

Suddenly there is a hush. Down along the street comes a group of priests preceded by little acolytes in scarlet and white lace, one carrying a large silver crucifix, the others censers. Following is a group of men bearing on their shoulders a coffin, and behind this a long train of mourners, all men. Corsican women take no part in public ceremonies of any kind.

As the little procession approaches everyone stands up, the men bare their heads, the women cross themselves, and all remain standing till the coffin has passed. At the corner of the Place du Diamant and the Route de Parata wait the hearse and the carriages to take the dead and the chief mourners to the cemetery.

This remarkable cemetery faces on the sea, a mile and more away, behind high walls of pale stucco. At a short distance we mistook it for a collection of gay summer bungalows. The sepulchres, of stone or stuccoed brick, brilliant white, pale gray, pale pink, pale yellow, with domed or gabled roofs, arched or pillared doors, surrounded by trees and flowers, occupy one of the most delightful sites along the whole shore. But that is the Corsican way. All over the island you find isolated family tombs in the form of chapels perched in commanding positions, overlooking fine panoramas. There is a saying on the island that the dead are better placed and better housed than the living, and it is justified.

To the north, where the Cours Napoleon ends at the little Place Abbattucci in the center of which stands the

graceful statue of the young General Charles Abbaticci, member of an old Corsican family that still survives, commemorating the fact that he was killed in 1776 fighting for France at the age of twenty-six, is the railway station. Beyond the road leads on into the country with its fertile, sunny valleys planted with vines and fruit trees and market gardens, and its mounting hills that pile up nobly to mountains on whose high slopes the snow lies till late July. Near the station is a café where, you are told, the King of the Maquis, the bandit Romanetti, comes sometimes in his well-known automobile to drink a glass.

A shabby little place today, Ajaccio, its streets are uncared for, dusty or muddy according to the season, gutted with the heavy autumn rains, its buildings tinted with the soft patine of the passing years, balconied and guarded against the sun by blinds rarely thrown open. A shabby little town, but fascinating. As much for its surroundings as for itself, perhaps. That jewel-bright setting of turquoise gulf, of amethyst hills, of subtropical vegetation, those little climbing trails that lead in fifteen minutes from the edge of the town to the fragrant, *maquis* covered hills, to olive groves, to blossom-crowded valleys, to shepherds' lonely huts; the curving well-made roads that tempt the motorist to visit the farther villages and mountain hamlets in the wild mountains whose snows you see from the very center of town. You won't find any jazz palaces, any casino, any concession to modern demands of amusement, to be sure. Ajaccio is a century back so far as such things are concerned. There are two or three moving picture halls, and a munic-

ipal theater where a second-rate troupe of touring actors plays occasionally, but that is all.

There are no boosters, no advertisements. Pigs have been banished from the streets, but a flock of goats may pass through them on its way to the hills, guarded by dog and shepherd. Chickens are kept in every garden and the roosters are vocal in the early morning hours. After all, it hasn't a right to be called a city, unless age gives such a right.

But its winters are the warmest of all the Riviera resorts. Up to June the weather remains generally fresh and beautifully clear, with a sweet wind blowing in from the sea every afternoon. The procession of the flowers is endless and marvellous. Never was there clearer, milder, more buoyant water to bathe in. More and more you grow to love the old place in its lovely setting, its star and moon lighted nights when the nightingales are joyous, "singing of summer with full-throated ease," its resplendent sunsets reflected against the transparent profile of the mountains, its radiant, shining noons when the palms rustle in the wind and the whitecaps dance on the bay, its fresh mornings when the full breath of orange, rose, lily and lilac pours up from its gardens to the balcony on which you lean.

In Elba it was possible for Napoleon to look across the dividing sea and see the cloudy mountains of his native land. There must have been an exquisite torture in that possibility, room for bitter homesickness. For even the stranger who has ever visited Corsica will keep a wish to return there, want once again to tread the little streets of its old towns, to climb its mountain trails, breathe its fragrance.

CHAPTER III

WE FOOT IT TO PIANA

WE woke the fourth morning to find the golden sunshine pouring over Ajaccio, the whole country sparkling with color as a jewel sparkles when you turn it in your hand, and we opened our *Taride* map of the island looking for a likely place to go. For we wanted a long tramp.

Fifty miles away, across two mountain passes, on the island's western coast, was Piana, famous for a Garden of the Gods that has the one in Colorado beaten to a pile of stones—that is to say, in any place but Corsica it would be famous. Even there it is somewhat advertised, and the P. L. M. publishes a poster showing the weird red rocks (*Calanches* is the French word for the formation) against the background of vivid blue sea; but it is all more of a whisper than an advertisement.

Almost exactly half way was Sagone, where we could pass the first night, the second finding us at Piana. And between Sagone and us was Calcatoggio, where we could eat our luncheon, while for the midday halt the following day Cargese offered hospitality. The very names lured us, while the zig-zag pattern of the road on the map promised good mountain scenery. Since we didn't need to pack along any food, the knapsack J. M. carried was comfortably light.

By eight o'clock we were on our way.

There is a rapture in starting afoot in a new country on a fresh and shining morning with the long trail uncurling before you and anything likely to happen, that little else on earth can offer. In twenty minutes we had left the town behind, exchanging greetings with the country folk who were coming in with produce of all kinds, mounted or on foot, driving carts or wagons, carrying baskets on their heads or themselves perched atop the huge packs strapped to tiny donkeys. It was a lively road and full of sound—the clatter of the carts, the cries of the muleteers, the cracking of whips, the jingle of little bells, the braying of donkeys, the squealings of pigs. Drove of these intractable animals were being led and driven by harassed men, three to each, one marching ahead with a bag of chestnuts, from which he let fall a few at a time, the other two herding behind. A difficult business, for when one pig grabbed a chestnut another expected to get, the loser, disgusted, would head away and try madly for freedom. Anything the least untoward apparently sets a pig on edge, and in that state he moves in a highly speedy and erratic manner. We stood to watch—and to avoid—the temperamental advance of one especially lively drove, the men grinning at us as they passed. One of them remarked:

“You understand, *Messieur-dame*, there is nothing of monotony in conducting pigs.”

Our way took us through a valley planted with vineyards, still leafless, with almonds white as snow, and fields brilliant with young grain. Olives too and oranges. Along the road's margin ran a flaming band of wild marigolds, while every now and then a mimosa

let down its delicate perfume, shaken from the myriad fluffy golden balls that tossed sweetly in the wind. On the hill slopes white villas showed among live oaks and palms, closer to the road were stone farmhouses with saints' images in niches over their doors. Presently we came to a wayside oven, where a woman, remarkable for the fact that she wore a striped skirt instead of the practically universal black, was taking out huge round loaves with a long-handled shovel like an immense pancake turner. There were at least forty or fifty loaves in the one baking, and she told us, posing for my snapshot picture, that she baked the bread for Mezzavia, the hamlet a kilometre farther on.

We found these outdoor ovens were common in Corsica. They are built of stone with rounded tops, big as tiny cottages, with a roofed porch in front that shades the worker and protects the bread while it cools on the rough table outside. The fire is built in the large interior and raked out before putting in the dough.

Mezzavia turned out to be a group of not over a half-dozen houses, picturesque, haphazard and untidy. The open aquaduct that carries water to Ajaccio runs through it, with pigs, chickens, dogs, and children disposed along its banks. Beyond the hamlet the aquaduct crosses a valley on a series of fine arches. The road led under these, by an old chapel looking like a long shed with a bell tower at one end and a barren-faced house at the other. Later we found that a delightful path followed beside this artificial stream of mountain water, on which it was possible to walk for miles, if you didn't mind

crossing the occasional aerial routes, most of them unprotected by so much as a railing.

From now on we had to climb pretty steadily, making for the Pass of San Bastiano. As we climbed we began to uncover the snow ranges of Corsica's mountains. They were as sharp-cut against a pale blue sky as though it were California, and they looked very lofty. Several peaks exceed seven thousand feet in altitude, getting the full value of their height since their feet are almost in the sea.

We were among the wild hills now, covered with *maquis*, and the air was heady with the fragrance of wild lavender, sage, marjoram, the pungent leaves of the white cistus, the fainter smell of *bruyère*, a white heather, out of whose big nubby roots the famous briar root pipes are made—we had passed a small factory just as we left Ajaccio where the first rough shaping of the pipes was done. The finished labor is accomplished on the continent. Briar is of course a corruption of the French name and a misnomer.

We had been walking about two hours when a small hurrying brook shouted at us between green banks. We stopped to rest a bit and eat the two small rolls, flavored with anise seed, made by the peasant women and sold at street corners in Ajaccio, that we had bought for a stay on the way, as breakfast consisted only of a cup of café-au-lait and a slice of bread and butter. Across the brook the hill rose sharply, with a flock of sheep browsing there, small, unfamiliar-looking creatures with long silky wool, most of them black, some brown, a few white or parti-colored. We learned that it is for their

milk that Corsican sheep are raised, rather than their meat or wool. Roquefort cheese is made from this milk, the raw cheeses being shipped to the continent, like the pipes, for proper ripening and finishing. Apparently a Corsican never takes the trouble to bring anything to perfection—life for him is just one beginning after another.

We didn't dare to drink the water of the brook, knowing that probably clothes were washed in it, but we paddled our hands in its cool flow. This greatly excited an engaging dog, who hurled himself at us with demonstrations of delight, and rapturously accepted bits of our rolls. Presently the shepherd followed him, sitting down beside us, a dark, thickset man of middle age wearing a brilliant checked shirt under his corduroy vest and a pair of velvet trousers that were silvery with age. He was interested to hear that we were Americans and told us that when he was a small boy a young American had come to live awhile in his father's house.

"He collected shells, all sorts of shells, and was a man most *gentil*. He liked me very much, so much he wanted to take me to America with him. But my father say no, he want me at home. America is too far away. If I had gone, now I would be a rich man, is it not so?"

Even to Corsica America is the El Dorado of the world.

He did not, however, appear to be at all depressed at having missed fortune, and bade us a cheerful *au revoir*. We continued our climb and were soon at the top of the pass, a bare, rocky place with a rounded hill sloping up at one side. We climbed this to get the full sweep

of the view, which is magnificent. A chapel here is dedicated to San Bastiano, and any saint might be proud of such a location. The snow ranges cut the sky-line in a splendidly sculptured profile, breaking away in long points to the sea, to make a series of gulfs and bays that blazed miraculously blue. A world of hills climbed to the mountains, bathed in translucent purple, grey, amethyst and cerulean hues, while nearer green meadows and reddish plowed fields struck their own color note. Fine forests of pine and spruce hung like mantles on several of the high slopes. Far along we saw Cargese, which we wouldn't reach till about this time next day, a scattering of white dots against a lavender background.

The road swept down in big loops, giving us an occasional glimpse of Calcatoggio, not far away now. This little village has the distinction of being the home of Romanetti, King of the Maquis, Corsica's prize bandit. Credited with having killed eight men, he has been "wanted" for twenty-five years. Most of Corsica, including the police, knows him by sight. He comes to Ajaccio in his big blue car to dance in the café he favors, or to talk politics with his cronies, and departs again undisturbed. Now and then there is a raid, and then he takes to his lair in the hills back of Calcatoggio, he and his gang of serious bandits, with their "guides." These latter are a sort of lay bandit, who have committed no act against the law and do not fear arrest, but who keep a watch for those who have, give warning when needed, carry messages.

Here is one of the stories they tell of Romanetti.

He has two daughters. The girls became affianced to

two worthy and well-to-do young men, and a double wedding was decided upon. Naturally it was a time of much festivity. A grand feast was prepared at the Romanetti house and everyone of importance in Calcatoggio asked to it, including the town's mayor. Romanetti was at the threshold to greet all his guests, there was dancing after the supper, plenty but not too much to drink, everyone in the gayest of spirits. Midnight passed, it grew later and later, until the mayor made to go, having, as he said, important business for the next morning.

But Romanetti interposed:

"Being the host," he said, "it is impossible for me to leave before my guests. And being Romanetti, it is better that you should not depart until I can do so."

So the mayor stayed.

However, we had been told that there was no use asking to be shown the Romanetti house. Even in Calcatoggio the fiction dear to the Corsican heart that there are no bandits is maintained; if you speak the name of the King of the Bandits a blank stare or at most an uneasy laugh is the sole response. When it comes to bandits, *mum's the word* expresses the attitude of the native population.

The village lies spread like a fan some distance above the highroad, its stucco houses, washed with pink, yellow, pale blue or grey almost buried in olive and fig trees. But though it looked friendly and smiling, we decided not to climb the steep road to it, since the hotel where we were to eat stands on the highway, and is the only place that serves a meal. We hadn't yet grown used to the ways of Corsican hotels and our hearts sank when

we made our way into what looked like a deserted building. A big, cold stone-floored room, so dark we could just make out the long empty table that seemed its only furnishing, confronted us. We thumped about, hoping to stir up some life, but nothing happened till I found a flight of stone stairs leading down to Nubian blackness, fumbled down them and knocked at a door at the bottom from behind which came murmured talk. It was immediately thrown open, revealing a pleasant kitchen having a long stone bench across the further end on which burned a row of little fires, several with pots over them. Six or seven peasants were eating at a table. The woman who had opened the door smiled at me and said yes, we could have *déjeuner* in fifteen minutes. Would we drink an *aperitif* while waiting?

We would, so she followed me up, threw open the wooden shutters of two windows, letting in the warm sunlight, set a fire ready laid on the hearth into a blaze, drew a small table close to it, and poured into two small glasses the country's favorite *aperitif*, *Vin du Cap Corse*, a sweet, rather pungent drink with enough alcoholic content to banish it from our stern land, but precious little at that.

Within the specified time the lunch began to arrive, an *hors d'oeuvre*, an omelette, a piece of roast kid, very tender and juicy, fried potatoes, followed by a handful of dried figs and almonds, with a bottle of red wine that was not half bad. Then we had black coffee and a *petit verre* of cognac. The whole amounted to about fifty cents apiece!

Our hostess was greatly interested to hear that we were bound for Piana afoot.

"It is a magnificent promenade that you make. May you have good fortune all the way. And when you see the Calanches, you will be amazed. I have been there, when I was but a young girl, and I tell you, there is nothing else to compare with them."

We took our time by that cheery little fire, resting, reading a four-day old Paris paper, chatting with Madame, and the classic two hours the French devote to *déjeuner* had passed when we took the road again, our hostess smiling after us in the door, with the long name of her very small hotel extending above her head—*Hotel des Touristes et de France*.

From the inn the road made a series of steep switch-backs down to the sea, but we cut across these on a little path between the vineyards and orchards. The stormy days of the past week had blown up a big surf, that crashed and foamed among the broken rocks of the shore. For the rest of our walk that day we marched to that tumultuous music. In a brief time we had left the cultivated ground behind, and with the sea on one hand and the *maquis* covered hills on the other, made our way into Sagone as the sun set in a massed pile of threatening black clouds.

Just as we reached the place we passed a superb avenue of immense eucalyptus trees that stretched straight back inland as far as we could see. These were planted to drive away the mosquitoes that later in the year make of Sagone a dangerous center of malarial fever. Of course they are useless as mosquito-destroyers, but they

make a curiously impressive approach to the half dozen forlorn houses and the ruin or two more that are Sagone. These are strung along between the sea and the marsh made by the gradual silting up of the mouth of the Sagone river. An ideal arrangement for mosquitoes it is! Luckily it was too early in the year for them yet.

We walked along looking for the hotel we were to sleep in, but there was no sign of it, nor of any possible overnight place. The small post office looked to be the only livable house in the lot. Two women gossiped in the doorway, and I asked whether they could direct us to the hotel we had been told was to be found here.

"But this is the hotel," replied the older of the two, who looked like a New England farm-woman with her grey hair brushed tightly back into a small knot, a grey and black striped apron over the snugly fitting black dress, shrewd, friendly grey eyes, and a mouth with a hint of grim humor to it.

There was just one guest room in this hotel-without-a-sign, a small cube mostly full of bed and saint's pictures and crucifixes, but perfectly clean and having two windows, which I opened to let in some less faded air. Then I asked whether I could have some hot water.

"And what does Madame want of hot water?"

"To wash in."

"Ah, la-la! So Madame washes in hot water? *Tiens*, she will then want a great deal!"

And in about ten minutes she brought me a small tin saucepan with about a pint of boiling water in it. Madame's grimly amused expression as she handed it in was accentuated.

She discussed dinner with us. There was no meat, but did we eat sausage? Some soup, an omelette, macaroni with cheese? She could give us a good bottle of wine. It was agreed. And for breakfast? *Café-au-lait*! Unhappily, milk did not exist. To be sure, the shepherd might pass within hail next morning, and should he do so she would get him to milk one of his *brebis* (ewes) for us. It would be as the good God willed.

We ate our dinner in a mysterious gloom, lighted at the remote corner where we sat by a tall thin lamp that smoked desperately if it was turned above a faint glimmer. Far across the room, that seemed immense in the dimness, was the door to the kitchen, equally murky. Madame came back and forth with the dishes, carrying in one hand a small glass lamp filled with olive oil with a wick sticking out of one side, like an old Roman lamp.

While we were eating, a thunderstorm let loose suddenly with a vigor that seemed likely to sweep what was left of Sagone into the sea.

The history of the place is characteristically Corsican.

Centuries ago it was a thriving little city with a cathedral and a bishop's palace, pretty houses, vineyards and cultivated fields. The river then ran swift and clear to the sea, the harbor was full of trading ships, and guarded by the high tower on its southern promontory—the tower still stands, staring across the empty sea and the almost as empty land.

The last of the Sagone bishops was a mighty lord, with great riches, noted for his lavish hospitality rather

than for his piety. It may have been this regrettable fact, or the carelessness of the tower's garrison, but one night the Saracens landed unnoticed, springing full-armed on the sleeping town. By morning most of the inhabitants had been put to the sword, the rest taken away as slaves, the houses razed to the ground, and the palace and the cathedral were smoking ruins. Nothing remained but death and desolation.

The bishop, warned by a faithful retainer, had managed to escape, with a few of his priests. They retired to Vico, in the mountains, where there was a large monastery, establishing themselves there. From that day to this Sagone has been little but a pile of ruins, many of these gradually sunken under the marsh.

After we got to know the island better we didn't wonder that its small towns are built on almost inaccessible heights, crushed close about some stronghold, with watch towers in front. There was no such thing as safety for Corsica in a thousand bloody years.

Dinner over, there was nothing to do but go to bed, our light a single candle. But we were sleepy and weary enough to ask nothing better. The storm went crashing on, and the sea and the rain chanted through our dreams all night.

Next morning we found clouds and sun fighting together, now one getting in a dash of rain, now the other a warm flow of light. Alas, the shepherd had not been by! We made our breakfast of hard dry bread and something black and fluid supposed to be coffee. Fortunately Madame brought to us a bottle of good old

rum, which she begged us to use as "perfume" for our drink.

"It will put heart in you for the walk," she said. And so it did.

We went off, to spoken good wishes, in a fresh down-pour, but we wore our raincoats and didn't mind. The morning was bracing, the sea a white and grey splendor, the marsh a miracle of subdued coloring. Up on a height stood a ruined castle whose story Madame had told us at breakfast. Six hundred years ago a great lord, called Della Rocca, had lived there. He came from Pisa, and waged war against the Genoese below in the town, holding his castle stoutly against all assaults, and coming out to conduct successful raids when he felt he needed anything. But he was betrayed by his son for a sum of money or the love of a woman, Madame was not quite sure which. The father was dragged away to die at last in some grim prison. Not much of the castle stands today, but a ghost is said to haunt it—whether of the father, or of the villain son, was not forthcoming.

Sagone itself is fit only for ghosts, for that matter. Part of the wall of its ancient cathedral stands close to the hotel, and a bell tower, restored to some stability, remains. As we reached a height and stopped to look back at the place Tennyson's lines came to me. I murmured them:

"The place was barren, wild and bare,
Wide, wild, and open to the air. . ."

Our road clung to the face of high cliffs that broke in precipices to the sea and scrambled roughly to *maquis*

covered hills above. The view was a glory as the road turned and twisted, a mingling of sea and mountain, wilder and rougher than anything along the Riviera.

Corsica remains primitive, both in its physical appearance and in its people. Centuries of foreign domination and of building have left only slight marks. Towers and castles are heaps of stone or, at most, striking notes in the landscape; endless terraces planted with figs, olives and vines are returning to the ancient hills; and the people remain shepherds or foresters or charcoal burners with the rich resources of their country left undeveloped.

A period of sunshine was followed by a heavy shower and we looked about for a momentary shelter among the piled rocks. As we hurried along a voice hailed us and we looked up to see a man standing in the sheltered lee of an overhanging mass of stone, warming his hands at a fire.

He was a tall thin old fellow wrapped in a blue cloak, considerably worn, and wearing a battered, broad-brimmed hat. Under it was a face Tintoretto would have loved to paint, with a fine dark skin, innumerable wrinkles about the pleasant eyes, with that far-seeing expression in them that belongs to men who live their lives outdoors, an eagle nose, a grizzled, curling beard.

He greeted us in French but added that he knew only a few words of the language, speaking only "Corsican." The older Corsicans, men of the hills and the *maquis*, often know only this dialect, founded on Italian but much mixed with Basque, Arabic and other tongues, besides having words and inflections all its own. The younger generations all speak, read and write French.

As we struggled to talk together we were joined by a second shepherd, much shorter, equally old, a mere wisp of a man under a huge green umbrella. As he closed this he laughed and said it was called the "shepherd's house."

Both smoked pipes, as did J. M., and presently they swapped tobacco with him. Theirs was a curious rough whitish-looking stuff, and I noticed that after J. M. had filled his pipe with it he gesticulated with the thing a good deal more than he smoked it. We told them we were going to Piana and they nodded, saying it was *molto bella*. The barking of their dogs called them away, but they shook hands with both of us before going, wishing us *au revoir*, then instantly disappearing down a little path that took off from the edge of the road like a leap in the dark. We lingered by the fire a trifle longer, while the rain marched away dragging silver skirts of low-flying cloud after it. Then we pushed on among rainbows, sun and scattered drops of water.

Cargese is surrounded by beautifully cared-for fields and orchards that spread away in all directions, mounting to the very summits of the rounded hills. It lies in the lap of a green cirque, facing a lovely bay, framed in by rounded promontories each of which is crowned by one of the paratas. Its story is a strange one.

It was settled in 1774 by a hundred and ten Greek families, the remnant of a colony that, for almost exactly a hundred years, had been living a veritable Odyssey. This colony had emigrated from Peloponnesus in 1676, to escape the harrying of the Turks. Arriving at Genoa they had begged for shelter, and the Genoese, nothing

loath at the opportunity to secure a number of hard-working men and women, carried them to Corsica and established them in a village near Vico, in a fertile piece of country.

But the fact that these people were sponsored by the hated Genoese was enough to make them anathema to the Corsicans. What a Corsican hates he does his best to exterminate. After a certain amount of extermination the remaining Greeks fled to Ajaccio, where they remained for the next forty years, getting along as best they could, which wasn't very well. They kept petitioning Genoa to do something for them, but nothing was done until the French took Corsica. Then the colony, which had maintained its entity, its character and religion—the small chapel where the Bonaparte boys used to play had been built by these people—was taken to the lovely semi-circle of hills we were overlooking, and allowed to build Cargese and till the land. Here for almost another century they remained without mingling with the natives, keeping their own customs and language, turning the land about them into a little paradise of flowers and fruits and grainfields. Their women did not slave in the fields like the Corsican women, and they continued to wear their own beautiful costumes.

But since then fusion has been quick. Few pure bloods are left, the Greek language, though still taught in the school, is hardly used any more, the costumes have gone with the language.

We had planned to eat our déjeuner in the Hotel de France, having been informed that it had a garden. But when we saw the place we left it unvisited. Through a

dirty doorway an inextricable tangle of children, pigs, chickens and dogs rolled and fought, broken windows stared at us, the garden was a patchy looking onion bed. So we turned to the *Cyrtos*.

Here we were luckier. A flight of stone steps led up to the second story of a stucco house with a dim *Cyrtos* above the door, and entering we found ourselves in the usual long, stone-floored room with the endless table running down it that is the thing for a dining room in Corsica. About two-thirds of the way down this table a young man was eating in lonely state. He bowed, we did the same. The next moment a young and pretty girl came in, smiled radiantly upon us, and promised us something to eat at once.

While she went off to see about it, the young man talked to us. He was from Paris, journeying about the island selling an illustrated history of the war. He showed us his samples—they were very poor.

"These people do not care very much for art," he told us, "but still I am doing some business. Mademoiselle and her three sisters run this hotel—later in the season tourists will come here, now it is deserted. It is hard work for young women, but—" he shrugged.

Mademoiselle returned with the first course, and stayed with us while we ate, talking of her life and the town. She was full of spirit, of fun, ambition and intelligence, a flame of a girl in that dark old house. Pleased that we were Americans, she told us of an American mother with her daughter, an artist, who had stayed two months with her the preceding year, and who had begun to teach her English. She blushed when we

asked her to speak to us in it, saying that her accent was very bad, because she had no one with whom to practice, though she studied in a book she had sent for.

"I want ver' mooch to see America," she said, and burst out laughing, covering her face with her hands. "Ah, it sounds amusing—I cannot say more!"

She gave us a sketch of the amount of work she and her sisters did. It was overpowering. There was the washing of all the heavy hotel linen in the communal fountain, a back-breaking business, the house cleaning, and it was a big, rambling house without any conveniences. All the water used had to be brought in from that same fountain, which was quite a distance up the street. Then there was the wood to bring in from the hills, the goats to be milked, the garden and their small olive orchard to be tended, pigs to feed, chickens. . .

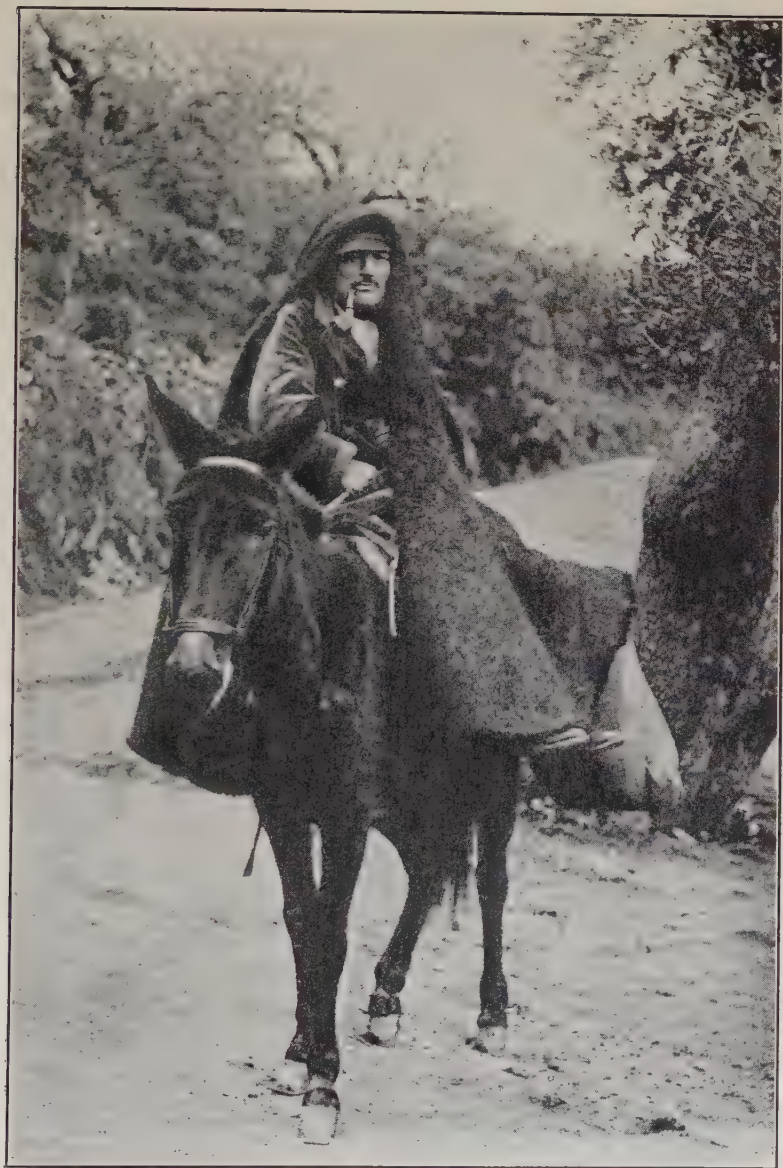
"There is never an end," she said, smiling brilliantly, "and at the last what have we? A little handful of silver, perhaps."

I looked at her, so young, so lovely, so full of life, and wondered whether she would be worn out and weary and sad by the time she reached thirty, like most of her compatriots.

We had to leave as soon as we had eaten, as by far the longer part of our walk still lay ahead of us.

"Come again," she begged us, "when the spring is farther along, and stay here a few days. It is beautiful here, you will like it." We meant to, but we never did.

The town, or village rather, is built of tall houses set regularly along the streets, and has two churches, a Greek and a Roman Catholic, facing each other across the nar-



The Corsican rides sitting sideways, squeezed between the wooden cross-pieces of the packsaddle, without halter or bridle

row valley it rims. It is clean, the houses are white, toned by age to soft greys, and we did not see the usual number of pigs and other livestock littering the streets. A pleasant place, Cargese.

We crossed a bridge over a bright stream, the Lomberlaccio, soon after leaving the village, beginning at once on an uninterrupted climb of fifteen kilometres, following along one side of a wild and magnificent cañon at whose bottom the stream raced. But oh, the deadly persistence of that rising road! The engineer who had planned it knew no concession to human nature—or legs. Science was his god, efficiency his master. In and out on the indentations of that rocky wall the road went, but never down by so much as two feet. The wildness of the scenery was reminiscent of the Rocky Mountains, curiously mixed with patches of intensive cultivation wherever a terrace could be cut and buttressed by supporting walls. Most of the planting was citron trees, that supply one of Corsica's most valuable exports—the slice of citron in your plumcake has usually come from this very cañon or the country near it back of Piana and Porto.

Mile after mile, mile after mile we crept upward! Thin torrents dropped their white arrows from the cañon's opposing rim or broke crookedly across the face of the cliff. Tall pines rose from below, mingling their music with that of the singing stream. We met no one on the whole walk, but once we heard a youth singing below us, at work in one of those terrace-gardens.

It was long after sunset when we reached the crest, the Pass of the Cross, and quite dark by the time we had

finished the sharp descent toward Piana. On either side as we approached were the tombs belonging to families in the village, pretty little chapels surrounded by cypresses, and often placed where they overlook the finest bit of view to be found.

We were dazzled by a glare of electric lights as we arrived before the church. The glare was still some way further on, but it marked our hotel, one of the very few modern ones in Corsica, originally owned by Swiss people, but now run by a French proprietor. We went forward under towering dark trees, crossed a bridge and reached the small promontory where the hotel stood, apparently overhanging a black vacuum.

We ate dinner under electric lights, in a white and crimson diningroom at a small table with smartly dressed people about us. It seemed another world from the one we had been living in for the past two days, and a decidedly un-Corsican world.

CHAPTER IV

DONE IN RED, GREEN, BLUE AND SILVER

I PUSHED open the latticed green blinds that tempered the light next morning and leaned out to look at the view. Then I gasped.

A little bit of mother earth extended beyond the hotel, and ceased to be. Fifteen hundred feet below was a sheet of turquoise streaked with mauve, framed by two long, precipitous headlands of red granite. Across the middle distance floated a slender wreath of silver mist with its two ends tangled in the red rocks and green pines of either headland, a wreath that was melting and vanishing as I looked at it. By leaning a trifle farther out I got a glimpse to the left of the red-tiled village roofs, mossy and stained with age, of the graceful church tower rising white and pierced for bells, of terraces planted with cherry trees white with bloom, all stooping toward the gulf. Far to the right a bit of snow-covered range was visible.

It takes time to believe in a view like that, and while I was holding on to it to keep it from vanishing, a sudden, fearful sound burst upon my ears. It rose and died, see-sawing, paused, gathered renewed power, returned in mighty volume. Agony is a mild word to express the heartrending grief of that despairing protest, and for

a moment I shook where I stood, still hanging on to the view. Then I leaned yet farther out, looking down.

Directly underneath my window stood a small grey donkey, tail up, head up, mouth screwed to one side and gaping widely. But now only a grunt or two remained for him to utter. These accomplished, he sank into silence and contemplation. Never have I heard any animal give forth so tremendous a noise. It called for a gesture of applause!

We had planned to lounge and rest for this day, but the weather was so inviting that by nine we set off for Porto, thirteen kilometres away, the road leading through the Calanches and hanging high above the gulf until the last three or four kilometres, when it plunged abruptly down to the port of Porto. We carried our lunch along, to be free to spend the day in the open.

This entire section of the coast is a rampart of gigantic cliffs, worn and shattered by endless centuries of attack from sea and wind into what is almost a lacework of inlets, ravines and gorges. The rocky ramparts push up a forest of peaks and needles, all a rich, warm terracotta, the intensely blue water incredibly vivid against this hue, that reminded us of the rocks of Arizona and New Mexico. Wherever it is possible to find roothold pines have established their slim beauty, tawny of trunk and deep green of plummy head, while on the less precipitous slopes the varied tints of the *maquis* lie like great brush strokes. A trail of silver cloud, with the far silver of the rising peak of Mont Cinto, about seventy-five hundred feet above sea level, with its snow covered range of lower

peaks, completed the panorama, a world of red and blue, green and silver.

In some fifteen minutes easy walking we reached the Calanches, ultimate expression of wind and water carving in that friable stone.

The road twisted endlessly, overhanging the narrow gorges, spanning wild streams on single arched bridges, streams that leap in two or three white falls to the sea. Now we were walking straight out to sea, now as determinedly moving inland, according to the vagaries of that amazing coastline. Crowded upon us, extending far above and plunging a thousand feet and more below, were the fantastic, cubistic effects of nature's sculpture. Strange beasts crouched or reared impossible heads, old men bent to peer at us, huge blocks balanced themselves precariously one upon the other, looking as though a mere push would send them crashing to the waves below. Here a curious company of half-human creatures gathered in mysterious confab, there a dread shape withdrew as we approached, to vanish, when we reached the spot where it had stood, into no more than a heap of rugged rock. Fancy joined with the moving shadows to create and to destroy. For half an hour we walked through a country that Wells might have imagined in a world beyond our own.

As suddenly as it had begun the fantastic show was over. The wild loveliness of sea and cliffs and pointing rock needles remained, the trees were beautiful along the winding road, but the goblin world was no more. There had been enough of it. Too much of the fantastic wearies. The least hint that the unusual is becoming

habitual and you are oppressed—something in our human makeup refuses to stay surprised—amazement is our most ephemeral emotion.

Presently we were looking down at Porto, lying at the inner extremity of the exquisite gulf whose stone-fringed edge we had been following all morning. It too is named Porto, and so is the bright, strong stream that runs into it just where the village huddles its group of houses. A small, heavily wooded peninsula with a parata atop juts seaward between the mouth of the river and a tiny cove, the whole a most decorative affair. The road led us steeply down to Porto and went steeply up again beyond the village, while inland two roads followed the two banks of the river in an equally abrupt ascent. The place is a mere lap of level land and only toward sunset can the sun find a clear path to the village. No gulf lovelier than this unsung and practically unpictured Golfe de Porto exists in the world. Within easy tourist reach as it is it will sometime be a resort for thousands of trippers—and not so charming then as now, in its unruffled peace and loneliness!

The only hotel today is a small stone building with a few bare rooms, clean but comfortless, with little food to eat and poor wine to drink. An old woman with her two daughters, sad-faced, silent, but gentle and friendly, manage it. We asked to see the rooms, thinking we might perhaps come again later in the season for a few days stay. One of the girls led me through the family sitting room to the stairs; and noticing the enlarged photographs of two handsome young men on the wall, I asked who they were.

"They are my brothers," she replied. "Both were killed in the war. There are no men left in our family."

She looked with steadfast eyes at the pictures. There was nothing that could be said.

We had an odd experience in Porto. Passing a solitary house the door was thrown open and a girl wrapped in an Arabian burnous came dancing toward us. Slender of body, with a face lovely enough, but wild, her movements were unmeasured in their grace. Her hands held bread and dried fruits; as she reached us she began to laugh, circling round us, and begging us to take some of her offered food.

"It is carnival time," she cried. "Carnival, carnival! You must eat this bread I bring you."

We smiled, thanking her, telling her that we had brought more food with us than we could eat, and did not want to waste any, but still she persisted, laughing, dancing, waving her arms prettily. Her eyes glanced away from us.

Suddenly she turned and ran quickly back to the house, disappearing behind the door. At the same moment a window above was thrown open and a much older woman leaned out waving as wildly as the other, with shrill laughter.

It was curiously uncanny.

We learned later that there are a number of harmlessly insane persons on the island who are left free; there being no insane asylum in Corsica, those who are dangerous are taken to asylums on the Continent, which does not welcome the additional burden too willingly, but for the rest there is no provision. We did not know,

and did not inquire, whether some Meg Merrilees and her daughter lived in that grey old house, but could not forget the too-bright eyes and the too-wild grace of that young creature.

Another factory for roughly shaping the bruyère roots is tucked under the trees at Porto, but it was not running for that day. It might have been a saint's day, of which there are an endless number in the Corsican calendar. The men at least strictly observe the rule not to work on these occasions.

We ate our luncheon beside a small clear spring on the height beyond the village where we got a fine view of the gulf and the cliffs over which we had arrived. It was February still, but the sun shone with mellow warmth, the air was balmy with the smell of eucalyptus and maquis, yellow butterflies fluttered over tiny pink-petalled daisies and purple crocuses with lavender stripes that starred the grass we sat on. A blackbird that had happily escaped the Corsican pothunter sang riotously. We thought of the crowds in the subway and the probable blizzard shrieking through New York and beamed in selfish pleasure.

Our walk home was uphill and leisurely. When we reached the Calanches the sun was setting into the sea, dulled by a purple haze. Stranger than ever looked the witch world of ruddy stone.

On our way we were overtaken by a boy on a donkey who jumped off and asked me whether I would not mount in his stead. But I said no. The Corsicans ride sitting sideways, squeezed between the wooden cross-pieces of the packsaddle, without halter or bridle, kicking and

whacking their beasts in the right direction. On that track along the precipices it looked too hazardous as well as thundering uncomfortable.

"Perhaps you are wise," the boy agreed, shaking his head. "After all, this donkey has a devil."

We looked at the small grey animal walking swiftly behind us, head drooping. He gave no sign of evil possession.

"Would you believe it if I tell you that this very donkey has thrown my father, and that the arm of my father was broken? It is true. And in the whole commune there is not one other donkey who can run with the speed of this one. My brother, who is older than I, and much bigger, and who fears nothing, my brother rides him in the races, and never once has he been beaten. But it will bite, it will kick, it is a beast full of fierceness. My brother however does not fear him. He fears nothing. And how my brother works!"

The lad's eyes glittered with the joy of narration, his words came pouring in an unbroken flood. Life spread before him, full of glory and wonder, dominated by the hero figure of that brother. He told how this paragon rose before four every morning to milk all the *brebis*, and how later he took the flocks to the hills to graze, coming home late, but never weary. He himself rose two hours later to take the milk to the cheeserie, on the back of this very donkey. For each litre of milk they received six sous. Sometimes there were a great many litres, sometimes less. In summer they had to throw the milk away, but they had to keep on milking the ewes just the same.

"This donkey, he works well. It is only at times he shows the devil within him. But he cannot frighten my brother, who will ride him again next week in a race, and they will win. But this animal would not hesitate to kill a man if he were so minded. Ah, you should have seen my father tumble off . . ." at this joyful recollection the boy burst into happy laughter. Turning, he aimed a kick at the donkey, which the latter efficiently dodged, and then resumed his narration, bursting with excitement over what he was telling us and which, so far as we could make out, still involved the brother and the donkey; for by now he was speaking with such speed that comprehension could only hobble after him almost in vain. The reason for this growing rate of speed was manifest when he suddenly stopped, pulled off his ragged cap, grinned broadly, trusted that we would all meet again, and bade us farewell. He must take the small track that scrambled upward to the left and get home.

In a few moments he was out of sight, carrying adventure with him.

We had counted on walking back as far as Sagone over the mountain route leading up from Porto to Evisa and Vico. This was said to be a splendidly scenic route, but at the hotel they told us it was practically impassible because of new snowfalls the past week. So we gave up the idea, deciding to take an extra day at Piana and return by the post bus plying every day between Piana and Ajaccio.

The next morning we spent in making our way to the bit of beach at the foot of the village down a shaly

zigzag path a goat might well distrust. Once down the view of the huge red cliffs makes the work of getting there—and back!—worth while. It is superb. Interesting too was the Biblical scene of fishermen dragging nets, primitive as it could be. The nets are cast with the aid of a boat and then hauled in from the shore hand over hand by throwing a short weighted rope attached to a shoulder harness, round the long draw ropes at either side, leaning back and straining up the beach, quickly disengaging the handle rope and running forward to take a new hold. Two rows of men operate, one to each draw rope, the two backmost ones letting go to run past the rest, and flip their weighted holds afresh, and so on unintermittently, with the result that the net comes smoothly and steadily in, the shining fish leaping in the long loop it makes. With a clever twist or two the catch is dumped into a broad shallow basket and covered with a piece of canvas while the net is again cast. The business goes on in silence except for the splash of bare feet in water and the deep breathing of the straining men.

The village is a collection of grey stone houses, many with interesting outside stairways and finely arched doors. It is barren of anything catering to amusement, one or two dark little cafés where the men play cards being the only suggestion that life is not all a struggle for bread. The church stands in a small square where, on long stone benches, old men sit as long as the sun shines, talking in muttering voices of heaven knows what. The small crooked streets, unpaved and littered, straggle hither and thither without a plan. Women

hurry about with burdens on their heads, or kneel at the fountain washing interminable heaps of clothes. Donkeys and goats seek sustenance from rubbish heaps, chickens track in and out of the houses. It is a place full of pictorial charm, but to live in. . . .

The campanile is particularly lovely, square, well proportioned, with lovely finials and a small rounded dome rising between them.

Our homeward progress next day was a friendly matter. When we reached our stopping places of the outward march we were greeted like old acquaintances. The country bus we rode was rather a ramshackle affair, the benches we sat on narrow and hard, but there was a sort of family party effect to the journey so delightful that we didn't care a rap for the discomfort. We stopped any and everywhere to take on or let off a passenger, load up with great cans of sheeps' milk or sacks of potatoes or baskets of fish. Here an old woman with a bunch of fowls tied together by the legs and lifting weary, surprised heads to gaze on this new world, scrambled in, aided by willing hands; a little further on it would be a priest in his long black frock and wide, shallow felt hat, breviary in hand, who found a place between two shepherds, bearded and corduroy clad, shining with silver buttons. At Sagone there was a long stop, everyone getting out, or down, for by now the interior was crowded and there were passengers on the roof clinging as they might to the baggage. Our old New England-appearing hostess smiled at us, wanting to know how we had fared. "Have some coffee?" she asked, and set it down, with the bottle of old rum beside

it. More passengers waited here, everyone in the bus keenly interested in finding room for them. The driver appealed:

"Come, my old ones, make room! Monsieur is as anxious as you to get to Ajaccio. There is always room for one more."

And there always was!

There was another reception at Calcatoggio, more coffee and handshakes and fervent *au revoirs* as we lumbered off—not far, for we had a breakdown that kept us a half hour, followed, before we reached the top of the pass, by a second. As the driver said, if only this pig of a car would have consented to hold out ten minutes longer we should have been able to toboggan the rest of the way back. As it was, we got to Ajaccio a little more than an hour late, dismounting amid a small crowd collected to watch the arrival, greet friends, shout inquiries to those on the roof. It was too late for the meal served at the hotel, so we turned into a small restaurant serving an excellent luncheon, wine included, for the price of twenty-five cents each, feeling that we had already come to know Corsica pretty well and to like her even better.

CHAPTER V

IN A WALKER'S PARADISE

MARCH proved to be a chain of golden days. We began to swim in the clear water of the gulf with the first day of the month and kept it up consistently. The water was still cold, but the warmth of the sun made bathing a delight, even though there was no temptation to linger over it. In and out, and then a glow of well-being! The Mediterranean must contain considerably more salt than the great oceans, its buoyancy being about midway between that of the Atlantic and Great Salt Lake, and the water is so pellucid that as we swam we could look down and see every tiny shell, bit of seaweed, colored pebble twenty feet below us as perfectly as if we were looking at these things through clear glass not as many inches away. I used to think I could touch bottom easily and would swim down till my breath began to give out to find myself apparently as far from it as ever.

Not only the water but the land tempted us into the open. Ajaccio is the centre of a walker's paradise. Ten minutes brisk footing in any direction and the town is left behind, the world turns to trees and flowers, wild rocks, little winding trails, rough scrambles, or the broad highway leading whither you wish. Right behind the Etrangers a path led off that took us up through a fine old olive orchard to the *maquis* and live-oak covered

hills in no time at all. For the first few kilometres we found this path well-traveled, for that much of it is a favorite tourist walk. Leaving the town behind, it hugs the face of the steep hillside, following its uneven contours, crossing countless little streams and trickles of bright water, climbing up almost to the crest only to plunge downward again, until it makes a final descent to the sea road within three or four kilometres of the parata. Long before this it has become thickly overgrown, the bushes on either side so high that at times they meet overhead.

It is a good path, however, and we loved it. Sometimes it winds under sweet-smelling pines, sometimes it comes out on bare hillsides where queerly shaped rocks lie scattered about. One of these, a huge fragment, looked uncannily like a death's head. Just here were the ruins of an old village, and usually sheep were feeding on the short grass. On this path we found our first orchises; the little purple crocuses stuck their small heads up even in the footway; birds warbled in the trees. And the views of the gulf, of Ajaccio lying golden on the edge of the blue bay, of the carefully tended gardens that extended several miles on the shore side of the parata drive, of the cemetery that looks like a summer settlement, and of the mountains of the further shore, these views, constantly changing as the path twists or the shadows alter, are of an unforgettable loveliness.

Following this path to the end and coming back on the drive gave us a good hard half-day walk whose every step was charming. Once in a while we met a tourist or two, once in a while, farther along, a shepherd with

his flock and dog, or an old woman cutting faggot to carry home on her head. Sometimes we found the fresh traces of wild boar, common toward the end of the headland, where they are hunted each year with dogs and guns. Now and then we found, and destroyed, the snares set for blackbirds in the *arbusiers*, the arbutus trees, whose pretty fruit they love. Once we found a poor little yellow warbler hanging dead in one of these cleverly made horsehair snares. The Corsican has no pity because a bird is small, or exquisite to look upon, or a fine singer. He has almost cleared his island of larks and blackbirds. A small and highly recommended patty is made of the latter bird, for sale in Ajaccien shops, but we did not eat of it.

The whole face of this hill or headland, we found to be traversed by trails, one above the other, connected occasionally by vague headlong paths that were hard to climb but worth the work. The uppermost of these trails which began as quite a respectable road ended abruptly. This is called the German road, and had been made by German prisoners during the war. The idea was to build a Corniche clear to the end of the headland and run it down to join the parata drive. If it is ever completed it will make a scenic route of twenty-eight or thirty kilometres of which any country might be proud.

Another half-day tramp full of good things took us up the valley of the Saint Antoine, a small rapid stream that empties into the bay of Ajaccio just above that town. This valley lies between the headland and the next and higher range of hills, and itself slopes up rather sharply for some four miles to the little plateau on which the

ancient chapel of Saint Antoine stands. From there the land drops away again to the sea, in a broader valley where a stream, whose name we never discovered, flows in the opposite direction.

The most interesting way to get to the chapel was to mount the old so-called Roman road that rises in a series of broad, shallow steps from near the post office to the highway of Solario almost directly above Ajaccio. We never got over the delightful shock of the view on reaching the top of this roadway and turning to look back. Over a field thickly grown with tall pale asphodels that make a base of shimmering pinky-white light, we looked down on the whole of Ajaccio in its entire and marvellous setting of green hills, rich valleys, purple sea; beyond all this to the ever-mounting heights, splashed with blue and lavender shadows and topped with snow. Olive and orange orchards, fruit trees in white bloom, pines, winding white roads. . . .

And then we turned and took the upclimbing loops of the road through terraces of vines and almonds and past old gardens and new villas, with the hill rising on one side and dropping on the other to the valley we were to follow. A scattered group of villas above the road makes the hamlet of Solaria, a summer refuge for Ajacciens, where the wind blows more freshly in the hot season and they can sit at ease under their own vine and fig tree. The road takes an abrupt turn to mount to the head of this small settlement, but here we left it, to take a long slant down to the valley.

One of the abiding charms of this, as of other walks, was the seclusion, the peace of the country. Only an

occasional donkey and driver or a boy on horseback with milk for the cheeserie on the road or trail, the fields spreading quiet under the sun, the distant piping of a shepherd the only sound. The valley narrowed and grew wilder as we went on. Across it on the opposing slope is a huge pale yellow building looking like a college, but proving to be only the empty ruin of an ancient penitentiary. Near this is the school of agriculture, a modest little group of houses surrounded by beautifully cultivated terraces. Soon we dropped even these behind, the road climbing more briskly close to the stream. Rocks and *maquis*, with scattered trees, and cliffs that constantly piled higher, shut us in. Presently we reached another old deserted penitentiary, with gaping windows and doors. But at one end a room or two were inhabited, curtains fluttering in the mended windows, children and dogs playing before the freshly hung door. These places are relics of the time when France sent her convicts, especially those from her colonies, to Corsica; too stoutly built to disappear, they remain the forlornly useless shells of a forlorn past.

The road stops just beyond, leaving a mule-track to wind on a little further, past a stone quarry to the chapel. This simple and bare little building, closely shut, is a place of pilgrimage on the day of the saint. Then all of Ajaccio and the nearby villages comes afoot, on horse or donkey back or in carts and wagons and carriages and motors to pray to St. Antoine, eat luncheon on the grass, play games, sing and finally return home as the sun sets. All the rest of the year the place is deserted

except for the stone cutters, who live above the quarry in a few stone huts.

The little building had a look of age and tranquillity that harmonized agreeably with the landscape, somewhat barren, rocky, wild, and even lonelier for the few half-hidden huts than had there been no sign whatever of human life.

Our walk homeward was back down the floor of the valley, full of sweet odors from the tended fields and striped with the long shadows of the trees.

We had come to Corsica primarily to finish some pressing work, and it was only occasionally that we could treat ourselves to one of these half-day tramps, and still more seldom that we took a whole day off. Usually we had to be content with a couple of hours afoot and a good swim.

I had less conscience in this matter than J. M., and whenever a particularly glorious morning came to town I would offer suggestions and emit hints, all leading to the spending of the ensuing day on some desired excursion. On one such outlaw morning we started away to climb the high peak on whose shoulder Duke Pozzo di Borgo, descendant of one of Corsica's famous families, has built the astounding château that is one of the curiosities of the island.

To reach the place we had to follow the valley next beyond that of Saint-Antoine, the same one we had taken when we walked to Piana. But now we were familiar enough with the lay of the land to be able to take short cuts that kept us off the highways most of

the time. There is a network of narrow, cobble-paved, grass-grown tracks that wind between the various properties for miles with turfy edges charming to tread, that are dustless, solitary and bordered by sweet-smelling trees and flowers. We took one of these to the still lovelier aquaduct path that led across country to the main road within three kilometres of the entrance to the Borgo grounds.

The water in this aquaduct comes from the high mountains and is perfectly pure at its source. But, being uncovered, it is exposed to contamination, and can only be used for washing purposes, and to irrigate the fields and gardens near Ajaccio. The town has two forms of fountains—practically none of the houses have water laid on, so that all that is used has to be brought in from outside—one distinguished by a lion's head. This head marks the drinking water, and it was the Empress Eugenie, on a visit she made to Corsica, who put in these lion fountains.

The open aquaduct runs clear and lovely under bending trees through a perfect tangle of wild flowers, with a narrow pathway beside it that makes an enchanting promenade. Now and then it crosses a valley, shallow or profound, on a series of arches. When these are very high the path is protected by an iron railing, but generally there is no guard at all. Anyone who is uneasy at a height ought not to go this way, for the foot-path is only about eighteen inches broad. We found we liked to keep our eyes on the gently flowing water as we crossed these places rather than on the drop. Once

I had to sneeze just halfway across. It was a tremendous experience.

The avenue leading through the Borgo Park to the château is planted with old eucalyptus trees and rises in a series of sharp hairpin turns for seven kilometres. The sun was hot enough to make the shade delightful, and the sound of the trees in the fresh breeze was beautiful. They have a music of their own, long and sighing with a crisp rustle running through it, and then the fragrance of them! Next to a pine it is the best smelling tree in the world.

The abrupt slopes of the mountain on this side are splendidly patched with groups of chestnuts, olives and pines and with masses of tumbled rock and stretches of *maquis*. With cows and sheep too, watched by an old man or woman or a couple of children. The avenue is falling into disrepair and was deep in fallen leaves, but all the more pleasant for that.

Half-way to the top we came to the mausoleum of the Borgo family, a small, graceful chapel standing on a little plateau that commands a fine view over the down-dropping country to the sea. Behind it are some magnificent cedars, that must be hundreds of years old. The tomb itself is far older than the château. But older yet is the heap of ruins a little farther on, all that is left of the ancient village of Pozzo-di-Borgo, destroyed in 1574 by a raiding band of pirates from Africa. A broken tower and part of the stronghold still stand, with vague stone foundations half buried in green growth.

The last zig-zags of the road lead through what is called the English garden, planted with decorative trees

and shrubs and laid out in lawns and flowerbeds, to terminate before a great terrace, surrounded with an exquisite balustrade brought from the château of St. Cloud. In the center, over two thousand feet above sea level, with a wonderful view in all directions, stands the extraordinary building itself.

Carved on a large slab of pink granite set above the portico of the main entrance, which faces north, we read the following inscription:

"Jerome, Duke Pozzo di Borgo, and Charles his Son have built this edifice with the stones derived from the demolition of the Tuileries, reproducing one of the pavilions of that palace, burned in Paris in 1871, in order to conserve to the land of Corsica a precious souvenir of the land of France. The year of our Lord 1891."

On the Avenue of the Bois de Boulogne the château would be a fitting and magnificent thing. On this lone peak in Corsica it is an anachronism, a joke—yet it remains beautiful. And one can only thank the man who saved so much that is exquisite from destruction. According to report, however, it was not this amiable motive that impelled the duke to spend a fortune in bringing part of the palace of the Tuileries to his Corsican hill top, but an abiding hatred of the Bonaparte family.

The enmity is an hereditary one, Napoleon and the Duke Jerome of his day having opposed each other in a local election where blood was spilled and men kidnapped. Just how the building of a château from the ruins of a palace can satisfy the instinct of revenge is

not clear to any but Corsican subtlety, but to all intents and purposes this lovely place is a spite building.

"The château is open every day," we'd been told, "and you must be sure to go in to see the portrait painted of Napoleon in 1815 by David, and the tapestries, and the great doorway to the dining hall brought from the château of Amboise, and, and, and. ."

But nothing could have been more tightly closed, and when we finally discovered a gardener he told us that the only man who had a key was away for the day, adding that he was often away. He advised us to climb the height above the château and see the view from there, an hour's walk.

"The world does not hold another such prospect," he declared, with passionate conviction.

So we climbed some more, past the vegetable gardens and service buildings and vineyards to the bare peak crowned by a wooden triangle blackened by time and liberally carved with initials that marks 780 metres of altitude. And indeed we could see almost all Corsica! White Cargese and the heights behind which Piana shelters, the snow peaks of Mount Renoso and Mount d'Oro, the gulf of Ajaccio in its mountain frame, the long snow ranges sweeping inward, the gulfs of Lava, Liscia and Sagone, a string of turquoises, the farther, darker blue of the Mediterranean, villages clinging to mountain sides or lying along the coasts, forests and plains spread green and gold! We descended to find the gardener waiting for our exclamations.

Satisfied by our demonstration, he offered to show us a footway leading down the slope on the side of the

valley of Saint-Antoine, past the Agricultural School, which he described as eminently picturesque. At the end of a roadway absolutely bowered with golden mimosa just coming to full bloom, though by now the mimosas near Ajaccio were past, he pointed down a precipice rather than a slope, on whose face a faint trail lay like a twisted whiplash.

And by that way we slid home.

Happily I have no intention of describing all the walks we took around Ajaccio, even though there isn't one that doesn't merit a little song of praise all to itself. There is one other all-day hike, however, that I haven't the heart to leave out of this walker's chapter. Few people ever take it, yet it has every characteristic that endears a tramp to a lover of walking. We took it on a radiant day in April after a rainy week, with the country as sweet and fresh as a newly washed child, and the fields thicker with flowers than grass. There were spikes of tall blue lupin, orchises yellow, spotted and purple, poppies, pimpernels both blue and scarlet, great sheets of big golden daisies, yellow iris in the stream beds, nodding reaches of narcissi breathing out an intoxicating perfume, hawthorn just beginning to whiten the hedges. All the deciduous trees were in new leaf, furze burned yellow on the hill slopes, and in secret places white lilies lifted clusters of perfumed flower heads. Already too the *maquis* was flowering, the white and rose blooms of the cistus, like little roses, starring the acres of dull green with their crowding, cheerful faces, and the lavender covered with purple spires. Close to the footway grape-hyacinths

swung their blue and tasselled bells, violets sat close to mother earth, vetches ran the gamut from white to rose or purple.

As far as the eucalyptus avenue we went the same way we had followed to reach the di Borgo château. From that point we circled round the huge bulk on which that château stands, first northward, then westward, mounting all the time on an easy grade. We had the snow ranges in sight across a wide and hilly valley to our right until at the turn we picked up the sea, the gulf of Lava directly below, intensely blue with a golden strip of beach on which surf broke in a glittering line. There was a high-perched huddle of houses to the left that a woman washing clothes in a brook told us was a cheeserie and farther on a farm house and outbuildings right on top of a hill looked to be completely surrounded by sky. The passion of the Corsican to put his homes, his places of work or his gardens in eeries an eagle might fancy is inexplicable until you remember the centuries through which he existed in constant danger of annihilation from raiding enemies.

Villanova was the village we were bound for. Few strangers go there and when we appeared a group of deeply interested children followed us along the one street of the small place. Groups of women sat in the doorways working, men lounged in sunny spots, and all saluted us as we passed. When we asked for the café one boy, a trifle bolder than the rest, walked ahead of us to a small stone house squeezed among its neighbors, with never a sign to mark it. He almost burst with im-

portance as he pushed open the door and beckoned us in, then ran off giggling to join his companions.

The room we entered was pleasant, stone floored and panelled with dark wood, the shelves of a small shop at one side, a square table in the middle, white curtains at the two windows, a nice smell of fresh bread and roasting coffee wafting in from the kitchen beyond. We wanted beer but Villanova is too far off the beaten track for that, so we took Vermouth and water, chatting with the pretty woman who served us. She told us automobiles rarely came there, since the road was narrow and there was hardly room to turn even in the town itself. "And few tourists walk so far," she added.

She came to the door as we left and I offered to snap a picture of her. But the children were waiting for us, and as soon as they caught sight of my camera they packed themselves before it, so that there was a lot of child and very little woman in the picture. One of the small boys ran quickly up after I had snapped the thing, and peered into the lense.

"But I want to see the picture," he said. "Where is it?"

One of Romanetti's daughters lives in this hamlet—one of the two whose wedding feast was honored by the visit of the mayor of Calcatoggio.

The road ends at Villanova, becoming a narrow mule-track that hangs to the mountain side above the sea for a while, then turns inland through the *maquis*. A gendarme driving two loaded mules before him overtook us as we were looking for a pretty place to lunch, looked at us sharply, but smiled and nodded when we said we



The cross always dominates a Corsican village

were American. That explained the mad business of being found walking so far from what must be our place of residence. We asked whether the water in a tiny clear stream crossing the path was good to drink, and he said yes, so we climbed to a grassy slope to rest and eat.

Here I found quantities of wild cyclamen, larger and more brilliantly colored than those of the Alpine valleys in Savoie or Switzerland, and delicious with their lemony fragrance. Close to the brook too were hundreds of the pretty golden faces of the lesser celandine. Wordsworth sat with us at that meal!

The mule path we were on was due to take us to the Parata road leading back to Ajaccio. We were now on the opposite slope of the headland, however, and had to go almost to its end, where the tower stands, before our trail led across it in a stiff climb. Just before this climb began we came to a wide grassy plateau where we found a group of ruined houses and a chapel, with a long low building in good repair on whose steps sat a few shepherds with two or three women and a small boy.

We stopped to greet them and ask which of the many trails that made a network over the grass was the one we ought to take. One of the men, obviously the head of the family, rose to point it out. Then he asked us to stop and take coffee with him.

Naturally we accepted, and while one of the women went in to prepare it chairs were brought out for us. Conversation began. We were Americans—few Americans came to Corsica. How did we like the island?

We liked it very much and said so, which pleased

everybody. Then we were asked if in America we ate Roquefort cheese. The sheep they tended were raised and kept to make this cheese, which went all over the world. What price did we have to pay for it in America?

From cheese we switched to the rate of exchange, to conditions in the two countries. They knew about our great prairies, our vast herds of cows, but why was it that we did not raise sheep and make our own cheese?

The woman, returning, whispered to the head man, who rose and asked us to come in. We followed him down a narrow hallway to the big kitchen, a stone room immaculately clean, with a long stone bench at one end on which burned two small fires of charcoal. Near the window stood a table of chestnut wood and there were several rush bottomed chairs. Except for a few pots and pans, bright copper, that was all.

On the table stood three after-dinner coffee cups of pretty china, a pot of excellent coffee, a plate of small hard cakes made from anise-flavored white flour and sugar, and a tall bottle of remarkably good eau-de-vie, with three tiny glasses. Our host seated himself with us, the women disappeared, the other men took chairs about the room, and the boy, a youngster of three, moved about from one to another, shyly regarding us.

The talk went on for another half hour, lively, entertaining, alert talk, and then we had to go, as it grew late and there was many a kilometre yet to traverse. We shook hands all round, with the usual hearty good-byes, and one of the younger men came a short way with us to be sure we got the right start.

It is these personal, delightful contacts that the tramper

is always finding in Corsica and that the traveler by automobile cannot know. The manners of the Corsican peasant have the ease and distinction of perfect breeding. A Corsican considers himself as good as every other Corsican, which means of course a little better than the rest of the world. He has the courtesy inherent in a proud, unconquered people, and the kindness of the man who knows hardship and privation and danger. He's a bad enemy, but a perfect host and the staunchest of friends.

When at last we got back to our own side of the mountain ridge the Sanguinary Islands were black against a sky of rose and gold, and the eastern ranges at the foot of the gulf were glimmering in the alpine glow.

CHAPTER VI

WHY CORSICA IS CORSICAN

It is impossible to stay even a few weeks in any part of the world without wanting to know something of what lies back of the present appearance and conditions. Certainly this is the case in Corsica. She is so intensely herself, has so pronounced an individuality, stands in so many ways apart from the nearby countries and peoples of the continent. Why is Corsica so Corsican?

As we began to go about over the island we picked up scraps of legend and history, came to monuments and ruins, saw traces of very ancient occupation, ran across information in the local press and in books. The story of Corsica filled out for us. It is a story beginning so long ago that no record exists of this beginning. Neolithic man was at home here. The Stone Age and the Bronze Age have left plenty of souvenirs, and almost all the nations of the world their footprints, usually bloody ones, on the intrepid island, that continued nevertheless to guard its own race, descended from no one knows who, and to keep some measure of freedom. To the Corsican four or five hundred years are but as a day, and he talks as familiarly of the national hero, Sampiero, as though it were less than four, rather than more than four hundred years, since he fell by the assassin's knife on the hill slope near Cauro.

Our interest in Corsica's history had its start in a trip we made to Bastelica, birthplace of Sampiero, a mountain village forty kilometres from Ajaccio, at the end of a road that was a series of gorgeous pictures as a necklace is a series of precious stones. Not so unlike a necklace too, for it makes a great loop, climbing through the mountains on one side of the river Prunelli, to descend among those of the opposite bank, with the red-tiled houses and the bright green fields of Bastelica as its clasp, and the long blue oval of the gulf of Ajaccio as its pendant.

When we came to the Etrangers we found two Americans, mother and daughter, there before us. To the best of our knowledge we four were the only Americans in Ajaccio, or, for that matter, on the island. And though we all avoided making the obvious comment, there it was—we were old acquaintances!

They owned a yellow Citroen, irreverently alluded to as the Yellow Bug, and now and then took us along on some excursion. "Let's go," they'd say, and wherever we subsequently went proved worth the going. There's not a dull stretch on the whole island, and the trouble in writing about the place is to pick and choose among all those stirring outlooks, wonders, surprises, odd or interesting incidents, for I can't pack them all into one volume.

Our friends suggested that we should join them in a trip to Bastelica and make our obeisance to the Hero of Corsica. We had been intending to go there afoot, but the distance was awkward, considering that we should have to do a lot of hard climbing and that

the weather was getting rather warm for stiff work later than ten o'clock or before four. And you can't make forty kilometres a day without sticking to it steadily. There was a service by omnibus, but only on one side of the Prunelli, while if the trip was made in a hired motor it meant being hurried along from start to finish without that liberty to stop and linger which to us at least is priceless. Miss B. who drove the Yellow Bug, shared our love of being leisurely.

But who, after all, was Sampiero, and what had he done?

He was not, certainly, the first Corsican patriot, the first to die for his country, but he is the first whose name emerges clearly in history. Before him many a leader of the wild mountain people had fought the invaders, kept them at bay, forced concessions through sheer indomitable courage. The mere fact that the Corsican race continued to exist after the endless oppression of the centuries is a proof of heroism attaching to each member. Signs and legends alone hint at this past. Up on a mountain peak, on a trip we took south to Bonifacio, two men in the omnibus with us pointed out a huge carved figure bent slightly forward. "L'Uomo di Cagna," they called him. This Man of Cagna has puzzled the scientists. Is he, as Merimée thought him, an idol, or as Renan thought, a figure marking some Phœnician sarcophagus, or as another student asserts, a carved menhir, rare as is any carving on these curious stones, of which there are many in Corsica. No one knows. There he stands, a strange, impressive monolith, the work of human hands, the sign of some invasion lost

beyond discovery. Back of the Phœnecians Corsican history does not go, and it is only surmised that these people ever made a settlement on the island. They must have traded there, but who was it they traded with?

There is a legend about a certain woman of Liguria who owned a white heifer. One day this heifer plunged into the sea and swam away, clean out of sight, to the consternation of the woman, who naturally gave her up as lost. But, a couple of months later, back came the white heifer, fat and fine, stepping briskly out of the sea as though she had come from the greenest pasture on earth. The woman, whose name was Corsa, welcomed it with delight. But the animal seemed discontented with home fare, and one day it suddenly rushed again into the sea and made off as before.

Clever Corsa, however, was ready for it. She sprang into a small boat and pursued it until it led her to a wonderful island, rising like a mountain out of the sea, jewel-bright, with dropping cascades of snow water, immense forests and fertile plains.

Corsa returned to her own land and told her people what she had seen. Whereupon many of them departed for the wonderful island, which they called Corsica, after the woman.

This seems to account satisfactorily for the beginning of the Corsican settlement until it appears that the earliest name of Corsica was Cynos, which knocks out the Corsa legend. Another asserts that it was the son of Hercules, called Cynos, who came to the island with his four sons, naming four of the cities after them, Aiazzo, Alero, Marino and Nebbino. But Ajaccio denies Aiazzo and

prefers to declare that it was Ajax who founded her. And nobody really knows. The salient fact is that each of these invaders wanted Corsica for himself.

All this is a long way back from Sampiero, who was born as recently as 1498 when the Genoese had held Corsica for two centuries.

There was no chance in those days for a Corsican in Corsica, so he went to the continent and became a great soldier and captain in the Florentine Black Bands under Jean de Medici. His name soon rang over Europe, so great were his exploits. Fighting the Genoese was the absorbing joy of his existence, for hatred of these oppressors was mixed with the very life blood of his race. After the death of the Medici the Black Bands were scattered and in 1535 Sampiero entered the service of Henry II, King of France.

But even in the Sixteenth Century in Europe there were moments of surcease from fighting, and during one of these Sampiero returned to his native land and there married Vannina d'Ornano, who inherited a great property and was a scion of his own clan, the house of Ornano. The Genoese governor of Corsica found a pretext for arresting him, and it was only after a hideous imprisonment that he got free, assisted by the imperative demand of Henry II. War broke out again, this time between the French and Charles V, who was an ally of the Genoese. Enough for Sampiero. He instantly rejoined the French army, and when Henry decided to take Corsica from the Genoese he returned to the island and roused his countrymen to join with the French. Bastia, St. Florent and Bonifacio all fell before the attacking

navies, Sampiero established himself in the inland city of Corte, and in 1553 France took formal possession of Corsica. Calvi was the only important town that still held out against the victorious French. Sampiero divided the conquered territory among his adherents, and Corsica saw herself at last free of her hated tyrants.

But Genoa swore that if she had to spend the last ounce of gold and sacrifice even her women and children, she would recover the island she had held for so long. She sought and found allies. With them she returned with thousands of soldiers and a great fleet of ships at the end of the same year, and for six years a terrific warfare raged, ending with the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis, which, so the historians of the period declared, "took away from France in one day more than she had lost during a whole century before." What was more to the point for Corsica, it delivered the island back into the hands of the ancient foe.

It is from this moment that Sampiero takes on the rôle of hero.

The Genoese returned to impose every kind of burden, insult and injustice on the islanders. Taxes were so heavy that half the population was reduced to ruin. No one was permitted to carry arms, with the result that the African pirates made endless descents on the isolated towns, capturing and slaying and burning wherever they appeared. It was only among the most inaccessible heights that the Corsicans could find the least safety, and here they rallied as they might, hoping for succor from abroad.

For four years Sampiero made a tour of the courts

of Europe, praying for aid. In vain. He got fine promises and hearty praises, but not a ship, a man or a piece of gold. He went even to Constantinople to ask Soliman for help. Despairing and sick at heart he returned to Marseilles, where his wife had taken refuge, only to find her on the point of going to Genoa to solicit an amnesty. Mad with rage, he strangled her. This desperate act alienated his few remaining European friends, and he went back to Corsica alone.

A small troop of his old soldiers gathered about him when he landed on the shores of the Gulf of Valinco, followed him to Corte and took the place in a perfect frenzy of fighting against great odds. For the next three years this man, already sixty-six, carried on an amazingly successful warfare against all the power of Genoa. Without resources, without more than a scattering of men badly armed, he defeated the oppressors in fight after fight, burnt their crops and their villages, threw the prisoners he made to the dogs. They dared not follow him to his hidden refuge, they could not capture him, they could not defend themselves against his swift, unexpected assaults.

So they turned to treason.

They found their opportunity among the cousins of the murdered Vannina, who were promised possession of Sampiero's lands. Near Cauro, and not far from the little village where he was born, Sampiero was led into an ambushade by his equerry, Vittolo, and there stabbed to death at the hands of the man he trusted. In an instant the enemy, hidden nearby, rushed upon the corpse of the man they had dreaded, tore it limb from limb,

carried away the head to stick it on a pike over the gates of Ajaccio, shouting their jubilant relief at the death of "le plus Corse des Corses."

There are mornings so extraordinary fresh and shining, so dewy, so thrilling with new life, that they seem to dawn over a world new-born, and all you look upon to exist for the first time. It was a morning like that on which the Yellow Bug took the road out of Ajaccio for Bastelica. May was at her busiest and fields and hedgerows were hung and starred with flowers. Wheat was ripening, in the fair meadows cut hay lay sweet as violets. The new leaves shimmered in the early sun, the bay was like a sheet of satin, with a brig, all sails set, lying motionless midway of the blue.

In a few minutes we were running down a long avenue of eucalyptus and poplar trees through the Campo dell'Oro, the Field of Gold, as it is called because of its fertility, due to the swampy waters of the Gravona, that finds a slow way to the sea here in two branches, separated by a couple of kilometres. On a small bluff at the very foot of the gulf stands one of the Genoese towers, called the Capitello. The story runs that Napoleon was besieged here for three days. He had fifty soldiers with him and only one goat to feed them all, and one small cannon to keep off the attackers. Ajaccio had lined up with the English against the French; while his old fellow citizens were sticking to that other Corsican patriot, Paoli; and some among them are reported to have approached the walls of the old tower and reproached Napoleon for deserting the "Pappa." But his reply was

so eloquent that he was permitted to escape, with his men—nothing was left of the goat—to gain a French ship in the offing. Before leaving the tower he piled up a lot of explosives and left a fuse burning, but not much harm was done to the massive thing.

We turned inland soon, climbing up the swift Prunelli, storming and thundering in white impatience down its rocky bed, the road winding in and out under forest trees, the horizon climbing with us, including constantly more and more ravishing views of the piling mountains, the rocky gorge, the green valley and blue water behind. We crossed a beautiful bridge to the left bank early in the climb, and after a while began to go deeper among the mountains, leaving the stream.

Small villages showed themselves far off the road, snuggled in a fertile bit of valley land or clinging half-hidden in trees to the rough shoulder of a hill. About a mile before we reached Cauro, we passed, lost in the *maquis*, the stone raised on the spot where legend declares Sampiero to have fallen under the knife of his traitorous kinsman. We did not attempt to find it, since we could easily have wandered among the tiny goat-paths for an hour and still been unsuccessful.

Cauro proved delightful, set in its mountain lap with a splendid outlook on the far blue gulf and the deep gorges and wide valleys that stoop toward it. The main street is shaded by large plane trees, the square holds an interesting church and clock tower, there is an air of well-being and comfort not too common in Corsican villages, due to the fact that many Ajacciens come here for the summer to escape the heat. Full of green shade

and the sound of rustling leaves, with a mountain tang in the air, it must be a pleasant refuge.

The hotel is said to serve an excellent meal, but we had our luncheon with us and pushed on, for who would lunch indoors who could eat under forest trees by a mountain spring?

I suppose there is nothing less satisfactory than trying to describe mountain, or for that matter any other kind of scenery. Our car hummed on up the beautifully built road, excellent as are all the main roads of Corsica, for France has built them, beside a singing stream, tributary to the Prunelli, and deeper and deeper into the mountains. Now we stopped to look at a cascade dropping masses of white water from a height, now we breathed the cool wind blowing from a wild cañon driving inward between leaning precipices, or ran out suddenly into the sunny, flowery *maquis*, or plunged into a forest where the pines rose close together and the wheels rolled softly over the fallen needles. It was in a part of this forest, with its pine-soaked air, that our chauffeuse stopped her car and we climbed out.

All over Corsica the Forest Bureau has established its houses and maintains its service. France is doing all the conservation she can, for the Corsican has no notion of guarding the island's natural wealth. He has ruined thousands and thousands of acres of magnificent woodland, and goes on ruining more wherever the state has no control. There are destructive fires too, as with us. Lately there has been much cutting down of magnificent chestnuts for the essence derived from the wood, which brings a high price, and the charcoal burners take their

endless toll. But reforestation has begun, and probably the worst of the reckless waste is over.

There was one of these Forestry Bureau houses near where we stopped, and a forester approached us, rod in hand and creel over his shoulder, evidently off after trout. We told him we wanted to picnic in the forest.

"Go on a little further," he advised, "you will find a road turning to the right under the trees, it will lead you to a fine spring. But you must stop there, for beyond it is too narrow for the car."

In true French style, we took our time over lunching, and after it we roamed the forest paths, picked violets and cyclamens, and climbed above the pine forest to one of beeches, all young leaves and shifting golden shadows over a golden carpet. Passing from one of these forests to the other was like stepping from a cathedral to a gay summer kiosk, or from the Middle Ages into Greece.

Bastelica is a group of hamlets, each with its own name, charmingly situated in a circular valley backed by lofty ranges on which snow still lay the day we came there. These hamlets have gradually merged and are now known by the common name of the commune. They look down the long cañon of the Prunelli, that flows through them, coming from the splendid forest of ancient and gigantic chestnuts which clothes all the lower slopes of the range behind and reaches to the edge of the village. These trees are the chief source of income to the place as well as its main food supply. Very little white flour gets to the hill towns in Corsica, bread is made of chestnut flour, roast chestnuts are a regular part of the menu,

and the pigs too live largely on the nuts. We were told that a Corsican family could live on a chestnut tree, a couple of goats and a few chickens very comfortably.

The fields about Bastelica are miraculously green, fed by hundreds of little rivulets stolen from the plunging river, apple trees were blooming, vegetable gardens flourishing. We stopped the car in the church square, close to the statue of Sampiero Corso, to give him his whole name. The hero is shown in doublet and hose, pressing forward with his sword lifted high above his head, as though beckoning ghostly followers on to endless attack, and has a certain spirit, if no great artistic merit. Not far away is another monument, extraordinarily incongruous, raised to the memory of the dead in the great war. It represents an almost naked female figure under a marble arch of peculiar ugliness. But the list of the dead inscribed upon the base is impressive—Bastelica has not lost her power to produce heroes during the centuries that separate our era from that of Sampiero. The French do not hesitate to say that the Corsican is the best fighting man in the world, while the percentage of deaths during the war compared with population that the island suffered is tremendous.

We sauntered through the quaint streets and little unexpected squares, looking for the birthplace of the old hero, and presently found it, built, like all the rest of the village, of rough stones, two stories high, with the usual complement of chickens and pigs in the doorway. An old man with a very small donkey, whose picture I took, told us that it was not the actual house, which had been burned by Sampiero's enemies, but another built about

two hundred years ago on the identical site and with many of the original stones. A white stone set into the front of the house carries an inscription in the Corsican dialect to the effect that a certain William Wise, Irish Catholic and nephew to Napoleon Bonaparte, caused it to be placed there in the year 1855, as a witness to his admiration of the hero, one among many, whom these wild torrents and mountains have nourished.

It seemed rather fitting that Ireland, with its own bitter story of struggle and oppression, should sympathize with this smaller, wilder island, whose history is so much bloodier and grimmer even than her own.

Close to the Sampiero house is a smaller stone structure with some queer rough carvings of mythical creatures on the walls. This is said to have been his stable.

Our old donkey man pointed out the town hall, which is also the communal school and the gendarmerie, and told us that it was once a Franciscan monastery.

"It is the brothers we have to thank for our fine fields," he said, "but in their day they were more fruitful than now. They were great workers, the old monks!"

We returned to the Yellow Bug, to find it practically buried under an inquisitive group of children. They melted away before the torrent of invective hurled at them by the old man, to peer giggling from behind walls and doors.

It was the sight of a woman driving that roused the curiosity of these children and many others in other villages. They had never seen such a sight, and ap-

parently they thought there must be something peculiar about a car so driven.

If the drive up had been magnificent, the one down was more so. The road is a secondary route shoveled out of the face of the mountain with no guarding wall along its outer edge, that simply dropped off. It proceeded with such a tangle of sharp turns that we could often see it for several miles, looking like a dozen roads plunging hither and yon; several times I couldn't believe that we should actually traverse a portion seen below, but we always did. No route in the Rockies we had ever taken has a more savage beauty or thrilling grandeur. Luckily we passed no one on our way down except a few goats who stared at us amazed a moment, and then hurled themselves up or down the precipices on either hand as only a goat can.

Fit country for a hero son. We only wished he might have known how thoroughly it was to be swept clean of his enemies, and not only because France again took a hand in the affair, but because Genoa wearied of the hopeless effort to subdue the Corsicans.

CHAPTER VII

BATHS—AND WHEN IS A LAKE NOT A LAKE?

I SUPPOSE anyone who has looked about for a summer sojourn in Europe has been struck by the number of Baths in the different countries. A resort without a Thermal Institute is almost unthinkable to the European.

It follows that Corsica has its Baths. There are at least eight, and they are strewn all over the island. Wherever you may be, you may be sure that there is some Bath within reach with waters guaranteed to cure any of a dozen serious diseases.

There's one, for instance, close to Ajaccio, called by the pretty name of Caldaniccia. The Ajacciens are said to frequent it in great numbers during the season, which runs from June to October.

We went to it, one morning, not hoping to take a bath, since the season wasn't on yet, but to see it, and perhaps to take a drink of the sulphurous water, which we supposed would bubble up conveniently in some basin or fountain. Possibly, too, there might be a swimming pool available all the year—I used to love a dip in our western sulphur pools, hot or cold.

We got our directions and set off, first along our favorite aquaduct path, then on the highroad towards Corte for a while, then on the direct route to the establishment. This last turned out to be a pleasant, dustless,

tree-bordered road running between fields. It took off southward, just where one of the big wayside fountains, so common in Corsica, raised its odd cobblestoned shaft. There are hundreds of these along the roads, and of course each town and village and hamlet has its communal fountain, which is the center of the village life. Many of the older ones are beautiful, but these new ones, with their terrific attempt to be decorative, are ugly things.

The road seemed to be almost untravelled, and at first we thought it couldn't be the right way, but a man we met on a bicycle told us, yes, to keep straight on, it was but three or four kilometres further. He evidently thought it odd that we wanted to go to the Baths out of season, and stared after us as we pushed on after thanking him.

Presently we saw a large stone building blocking the way ahead. There were big trees about it and from the distance it certainly looked imposing.

"Seems to be quite a place," J. M. remarked.

So it was. Quite the biggest barn and house combined we'd seen yet, standing in the middle of a fine sea of mud in which wallowed a huge sow and her nine little piglets. She snorted fiercely when she saw us, rolling over on a billowy side. Her litter stood in an apprehensive row and stared as though they'd never seen the human form till then—and didn't trust it one bit—silent as stout Cortes on his peak in Darien.

Besides the sow and her young there were a number of bedraggled chickens pecking around drearily, making sad little protesting sounds. There was also a strong,

pervasive smell, compounded of all the more striking barnyard odors.

As for the road, it ceased without a struggle in the mud.

But we were not for turning back now. Springing from one of the dryer mud-holes to another, we got around the building and reached a field. Ahead of us was the railway station and a grove of splendid eucalyptus trees.

"Can the railway station be the bathing establishment too?" I wondered. We approached it. It was merely a small depot with a locked-up look. Evidently trains did not stop here till the season opened.

We gazed about us. This must be the place, but where was the Thermal Institute? It could hardly be folded up and taken away.

Then, to the right as we looked toward the barn, we saw a roof lying on the ground, a mossy, circular roof about large enough to cover an ordinary summerhouse. We approached it. The roof was not lying on the ground, but topped a round building sunk some seven or eight feet into it. A path circled the odd affair, reached by a few rickety-looking wooden steps. Openings in the building gave on the path, and revealed small cubbyholes each containing a zinc bath tub of ancient appearance, lying on its side or upside down. With the tub in place there must have been just room to stand in these grimy-looking cupboards.

A damp, moldy, unattractive smell hung over the place, but there was no sign of a spring of any sort. The river Gravona ran close to the railway track, but we could

find no connection between it and the bathing establishment. Where was the curative water? The guidebook declared that there were five springs emitting 20,000 litres each twenty-four hours, sulphur, soda, goodness knows what not. They must stopper them effectually!

We walked back to Ajaccio along the railway track, which is against the rules, but we didn't want to face the sow and the pigs and the chickens in that sea of mud again.

"Perhaps after all they're mud baths," J. M. suggested, "and in the off season the sow"

Most of Corsica's baths prove to be more or less on the order of Caldaniccia. There is another on the way to Bonifacio that was used by the Romans. When it was rediscovered and dug out the remains of an old swimming pool were discovered, with Roman coins and other relics. The waters of this bath are reputed to be of sovereign excellence, but the place itself is dirty-looking, unkempt, a poor, limp thing. On the east coast the baths of Puzzichello do make some provision for clients, but only of the most primitive kind, and this is the rule with the rest, except for one or two—Orezza, and possibly Guagno, which are approximately comfortable and well run.

Orezza is said indeed to be a really firstclass establishment. Its waters are extensively bottled and sold not only in Corsica but on the Continent. They are heavily charged with iron, and more easy to digest than any other known iron water. We did not get there, unluckily, for Orezza is worth visiting for more than its baths. The entire commune, a collection of prosperous little

hamlets in a magnificent and extended forest of chestnuts, lives a life unlike that of the rest of the island. The people of its villages work at a number of trades, refuting the saying that no Corsican will work with his hands. They forge metals, make guns, table ware, pottery, cure leather, and are famous for an excellent type of sieve. Their chestnuts supply food and profit too, and they could live on them as many other communities in Corsica do. But they prefer to work, and to be comfortably housed and prosperous. Everyone has a job and sticks to it, and the land is more thickly settled than anywhere else except in the cities.

But I did see the only other fairly well-to-do establishment, the Baths of Guagno, up in the mountains beyond Vico. Not that the place is at all imposing or given to senseless luxury. But the stucco buildings are new and clean, airy and attractive. It can accommodate several hundred persons, has a good swimming pool and all the regulation showers and sprays. There is a sulphur spring and one of soda. Even in the early XVI century these baths were much frequented, though they were not really developed till recently. Nowadays during the summer the place is crowded with Corsican and even overseas visitors. We were not going for the baths, however.

Miss B. came to knock at my door one morning and ask if I didn't want to take a run in the Yellow Bug with her that afternoon, spend the night at Guagno, and next morning early go on a tramp to one of the few lakes Corsica boasts. She had been told of this trip by

two Englishwomen who were fellow guests with us at the Etrangers.

"It's a splendid trip to Guagno itself, through Vico and magnificent mountains, and then the walk to the lake is interesting, and we can get back here tomorrow in time for dinner."

We ate an early luncheon and by one o'clock were spinning away on the same road J. M. and I had taken when we made our tramp to Piana. We stuck to it as far as Sagone, where we had spent the night.

It is curious to cover the same ground in a car that you have passed over afoot. Things are different in every way. You are farther from detail and more conscious of the mass. You are aloof in the car. The people met along the route are not fellow travelers but strangers. The hotels are mere hotels, not places for rest, chat and refreshment. Your only stops are made because of the car. You are conscious of the machine, the human equation becomes less important. On the other hand there is the exhilaration of the swiftly changing viewpoint, the elimination of dull parts of the road. An effect too as though the country you pass through were a gallery hung with pictures, that stay but an instant and give way to others. This is delightful, spell-binding. You live in your eyes, almost hypnotized yet thoroughly alive. I think you know a country better when you've seen it both afoot and from a car than you could in any other way—the extremes constitute a whole.

As we drew into Sagone the telegraph wires along the road supported endless chains of a brilliant bird about the size of our robin, but not so long and chunkier. Its

feathers were a glossy shimmer of bright orange and peacock blues and it had a beautiful way of swinging off into the air as we got close underneath, floating without a flutter of the wings, and wheeling back to settle again as soon as we were far enough away. Bee-eaters they are called.

Sagone looked as forlorn as ever, as it has in all the centuries since the Saracens sacked and burned it, but we did not go through it as far as the little postoffice-hotel. We turned and fled inland along the level eucalyptus avenue that runs for several kilometres between the broad and flowery marshes that make that part of the country dangerous in summer, but which are beautiful to the eye. Already the dry season was affecting the verdure of the hill-slopes, something of the California parched look was beginning to show about Ajaccio. Here the lush growth was rich and juicy, vines climbed among the trees and fell over the stone walls, reeds towered, there was a pleasant hot earthy smell and the cultivated portions were richly productive.

Only along the east coast can you go on the level for more than a few miles, and soon we began climbing again by a series of stiff switchbacks.

Vico is on the further side of the pass and we tipped over this and ran down into the lovely village on a smooth descent. Vico is the town where the bishop who was chased out of Sagone found refuge. Here for many years the bishopric was established. It could not have found a more enchanting place.

The hills open out delightfully into the broad fertile cup of the valley of the Liamone, that enters by a wild

gorge at the further end and runs swiftly along the valley floor, which is green and flowery and covered with tilled fields. The village faces across the valley, and is built on a finely wooded slope. Almost opposite on a small plateau that juts from the steeper, opposing hill-side, stands a handsome old building of pale stucco, the ancient monastery of St. François, surrounded but not hidden by magnificent magnolia trees. Vineyards drop down from it in a series of terraces, and the forest climbs above, with great stone peaks and sharp precipices breaking through the green.

Farther to the east the truly savage mass of the rocky Sposata, or Betrothed, piles against the sky. Where the names comes from I could not discover but there must be some old legend tied to it.

Chestnuts, figs and walnuts made the slopes near Vico verdant. The town itself is mostly a long and very narrow street, that winds serpent-like. We had to move along cautiously, carefully dodging children, old men, women with big loads on their heads, pigs, dogs and fowl, donkeys attached to tiny carts or packed with huge bundles of grass that swayed above them in green piles. The people nodded and smiled at us, but the small boys were a dreadful nuisance, since they clung to the car in such quantities that the poor thing could hardly drag itself along. I had to fairly beat them off, with what tact and gentleness I could summon; enough, for we were all laughing as we crawled along the picturesque street to stop in the church square.

Here there was a good statue in bronze of one of the town's celebrities, Casanelli d'Istria, one time archbishop

of Ajaccio. But a more characteristic monument might have been raised to commemorate the death of twenty-three members of the Leca family, whose throats had been cut in the square by order of Spinola, Governor of Corsica for Genoa in 1459, for the sufficient reason that they were good Corsicans.

There are a number of houses in Vico with fine curved stone steps and small galleries, the church has a good tower, and certainly the view from almost any part of the village is as striking as anywhere on this remarkable island. It does not get the sea, to be sure, but so rich is the color, so varied that mountain profile, that you do not miss it.

We scraped the boys off before starting, and I kept them off the rest of the way through the street by stern commands to let us be. So long as the first one wasn't permitted to climb on the running board, it was all right. But one on, all on.

The rest of the way on to Guagno was a constantly increasing splendor of mountain-route. We had to climb again, and steeply, with wonderful outlooks, crossing a narrow valley on a high bridge, then the Liamone, up whose left bank we made our way to the Pass of Sorro, over two thousand feet above the sea and more than five hundred above Vico.

The engine was pretty hot, and we stopped to let it cool and enjoy the view. Snowy Rotondo lifted its masses to the north-east, westward we looked over the beautiful valley with Vico like a cluster of pale flowers among its massed green trees, the rugged heights of La Sposata dominating the sky-line south of the monastery. East



Fountain and water-carriers, a common roadside scene

lay the green valley of Guagnò into which we were to descend some six hundred feet by a series of switchbacks that turned you giddy even to look at.

We went humming, taking the curves like a swallow, and rolled into the tiny hamlet of Guagno while the evening was still young. The village lies some half dozen kilometres further on, but the good road ends at the baths. Only two or three small houses, a ruined hospital, and the establishment itself make up the place. A new wing was in process of construction, and building is rare enough in Corsica to make this noticeable. Quite a sizable plant, with the attractive-looking hotel in a small garden. The baths were not yet open, and Madame informed us that they hoped to have the new part finished before the season began. She was a big, fat, pleasant woman who did not look Corsican.

She told us dinner would be ready in an hour, and after housing the Yellow Bug in a wooden shed we went off for a saunter. The evening was brilliantly clear and fresh, with a mountain smell. Pines clothed the slopes about us, plenty of live oaks too, white birches mixed in among them. The Guagno river rushed boisterously within a few hundred yards of the hotel, making glorious music. You have to look up all the time in Guagno, for the mountains spring up on every side of the small valley, and short as was our walk we did some good climbing before getting back to our dinner, which, alas, turned out to be pretty poor.

As usual there were only candles, and the one room to sit in, the dining room, was the customary cheerless long dark hall, untidy, without a single comfortable chair.

But we were getting up next morning at six, and were ready for bed at nine. My bedroom, a cubicle of yellow wood, opened on the barnyard, with the rushing stream beyond. As soon as I entered it a hideous barking burst out immediately beneath the window, and each time I moved the frenzied sound was repeated. This was too much, and I wandered down, fluttering candle flame to light me, and hunted about till I found the young girl who had waited on us at dinner. I told her the dog must be put somewhere else, and though she looked astonished, she agreed to see that he was taken away. There is a singular passion inherent in the breast of every Corsican hotel-keeper for keeping his guests awake all night and getting them up before the dawn, even is he has to use every bit of livestock on the place in the effort. We suffered from this at almost every hotel we stayed at, including the Etrangers.

“Why doesn’t one always get up at this hour?”

We’ve all said that on those occasions when we do rise soon after the sun, and, breakfast eaten, are off on some early excursion. Perhaps our own perceptions are more intense at that time, and we sense the immortal spirit within material things. Certainly there is a quality to the beauty of nature that is lost later, a crystalline purity, an ecstasy. The birds sing as they do not sing again that day, there is a fragrance that does not come so much from the leaves and the flowers as from the very air itself.

To reach the lake of Creno, our aim, we had to go through Soccia, a small village six hundred feet above

us, and the maid at the hotel put us on a small path that took a cross route through the woods, steep but delightful. Soccia, built in an amphitheatre on the abrupt slope, was most picturesque, with a charming old church and a peculiarly effective grouping of houses, that almost stepped on each other's heads in the different tiers on which they stood. Running water sang all through the little place. Rough stone stairways joined one switch-back of the solitary street to another, and more than once the water ran in gay little falls down these. A chestnut forest lay above the village, through which we must go. Here there was a tangle of goatpaths, among which it was difficult to pick out the one we should follow. But a boy, shock-haired, slight and wiry, with the light foot of the mountaineer, came to our rescue. He went clear up the top of the first ridge with us, pointed out the trail, gave us a few directions, smiled and was gone down the slope at a wild leaping run.

We crossed the bright flow of a brook on stepping stones, presently opening another cañon to our left, at the bottom of which raced the Zoico. The brook in its natural flow would have plunged in a long cascade to this river, but it had been led into an artificial channel built round the shoulder of the height, and so taken into Soccia. Our path took us above it, but along the slope of this same mountain. The tramp was scheduled as a two hour one, and it was steep. The sun here shone without let or hindrance. It began to have considerable fervor.

But we pushed ahead, thoroughly enjoying ourselves, for something over an hour, getting a trifle higher

steadily and also toward the head of the gorge, through which the river had carved its way. Suddenly my companion stopped, and pointed dramatically downwards:

"That's our lake, down there," she said. "We are up on the wrong trail. We ought to have stuck to the brook under the trees there."

I looked down. A small brown pond lay below, surrounded by sedge and willows.

"Good lord, they can't have sent us all this way to see that—duckpond!"

Miss B. explained that was just what they had called it to her:

"Just a tiny bit of sleepy water," was their description.

"But we've not been going anywhere near two hours," I pointed out. I couldn't believe anything called a lake could be so little like one.

"You know how people are," she said. "They always double the time you need to get to a place, if you are a real walker."

I knew that. You could not depend on other people's estimates of distances nor required time.

We sat down on a couple of rocks and stared at the lake. It didn't seem worth going down that stony, rough, breakneck slope to see it. Perhaps though at a nearer view it would prove more attractive. Further along we noticed that our trail split, one branch descending to the plateau in the center of which the lake lay, the other progressing onward to the cleft at the head of the cañon.

So we scrambled down, highly amused at the Corsican idea of a lake. It wasn't even a pond, we decided, as we

stood on its weedy bank and looked at the thick, turgid water. And we had hoped for a swim in it!

"Well, that's what the two Englishwomen who advised me to take the tramp said—that the lake was just a little apology, and that no one would think of calling it a lake anywhere else," Miss B. continued, delighted at the exactness of the description. "Let's get down to that river. We can get a good dip in one of the pools among the rocks."

We had to go back along the cañon quite a distance before we found a convenient place to climb down to the river. There we got a glorious plunge and a fine sunbath on a flat rock, before eating luncheon. I could hardly believe I was not in some little cañon among the Rockies of Montana, so like are the two places in the character of the wild scenery, in loneliness, in the feel of the air and the snap of the water. Certainly the walk and the river were worth coming for, if the lake itself was a washout.

When we got back to the hotel they asked us if we had reached the lake, and we told them we had, but that it was very small to be called a lake.

"Ah, yes, but it is at least beautiful," Madame returned.

We made a vague sound of acquiescence.

"You have seen it, Madame?"

"Unhappily, no! I am now too fat, and as a girl I did not live in this locality."

We left her her illusion.

Just as we started homeward a thunderstorm rolled up, pushing immense masses of white and smoke-colored

clouds over the mountain rims, making marvelous sounds against their reverberating sides. Only the skirts of the rain touched us and we did not even put up the top, for we didn't want to hide the really awe-inspiring sight. At Vico a rainbow spanned the sky and the forest. We might have been gods in Valhalla.

We arrived in Ajaccio in time to join J. M. at the Grand for an *aperitif*—at least I joined him. Miss B. went off with the car to have it housed.

I described the trip in terms of enthusiasm, but the lake as a slightly glorified mud-hole.

"It is ridiculous that the thing should have a name," I concluded.

When we entered the dining room at the Etrangers some time later, Miss B. and her mother beckoned us to their table. They were looking highly amused, and so were the two Englishwomen who sat near them, the two who had recommended the trip.

"The lake we discovered wasn't the lake," Miss B. informed me. "It is just a cow pond. The real lake was on through the notch, on the further side of that slope. It is about two acres in size, clear as a bell, and surrounded by beautiful trees."

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST LEAF ON THE TREE

MAY was middle-aged. Around Ajaccio the hills were turning brown, the asphodels that had shone so rosy-silver were dead stalks, the dust lay thick in the streets and floated almost as thick in the air. It was time to go. As it was we were playing the part of the last leaf on the tree, for all the familiar faces had left the Etrangers. The Englishwomen who made up an important part of its clientèle, most of whom had been there since November, had packed their sketch-books and paints, and departed. The French families who came and went after a week or two, came no more. Even the stout French woman with the bad heart who used to creep along the sea wall at a snail's pace and shrug her shoulders despairingly when you asked her how she felt, had rounded up her husband from the Grand Café and returned to the Paris she loved. The Yellow Bug itself had flitted down the hilly street that plunged from the garden gate to the Cours Granval, turning toward the mountains, piled suitcases witnessing that no return was contemplated. There was a flotsam and jetsam that appeared at one meal and was gone the next, coming perhaps on business, perhaps on some tour of the island. We were the last of the steady boarders, and if we were to see anything

more of Corsica before summer came with a strong hand to put us off the island, we must be about it.

But Ajaccio was hard to leave. We were so used to its easy ways, so comfortable still in our big sunny rooms, where the green jalousies when closed let in the sea-breeze and kept out the heat. It was pleasant in the evening to saunter along the quays and watch the sleepy life of the port, the ships that came and went, the fisher folk mending their nets or setting out to work, or returning with filled baskets of shining fish and savage-looking spiny lobsters. Under the moon the young men went singing in baritone voices with an Italian timbre, and later than ever into the night the procession of young and old moved slowly back and forth along the Cours Napoleon with an endless rustle of talk.

Sitting by one of the little tables on the terrace of a café, we had sipped our coffee and our glass of *cedratine*, Corsica's home product in the way of a spicy, fragrant liqueur, and had seen the life of the town go on for months. When the funeral processions which are an almost daily occurrence came down the street, preceded by priests in full canonicals, chanting prayers in murmuring voices, by censer boys and a great silver crucifix, we had stood up like the rest, the men with uncovered heads, the women crossing themselves, till the coffin had passed. Some times this went by on men's shoulders, sometimes in a ramshackle hearse pitifully decked out with shabby black and silver, occasionally in a magnificent plumed equipage; but however it passed the silent homage was the same. At the corner of the square opposite, where the military hospital reared yellow walls pierced by win-

dows out of which peered the pale faces of sick men, carriages drawn by lively little pairs of horses waited. Into these and into an extra motor-bus or two, if their number was very great, the mourners climbed, to be hurried away to that cemetery three or four kilometres down the Parata Drive, which faces the sea so gaily, all bright little kiosks and chapels with red-tiled roofs, snowy domes and plastered walls, buried in flowering trees and plants, with only the dark cypresses to mark it a place of the dead.

The men alone attend these funerals, the women going no farther than the church, where the funeral services are held. Only lately have they gone as far as that, for not so long ago it was the rule that they should remain behind the darkened windows of their houses until the burial was over.

We had watched happier processions, too. There was the fantastic show of Mardi Gras that filled the narrow street from wall to wall with a gay crowd in harlequin dress who danced and twirled behind King Carnival himself, a gigantic figure mounted on a cart, magnificently dressed in swallow-tail coat and black wide-brimmed hat, bearing a remarkable likeness to the Mayor of the town. Now and then this stately figure got stuck at some projecting point in the street, and there followed endless flurry and commotion of the rainbow crowd behind till he was got moving again.

The King was burned in the square at night, looking uncannily real and monstrous, waving to the last a huge imploring arm.

There was a grimmer happening on Easter Day that added its bit to our Corsican impressions.

It was just after the luncheon hour when we were all sitting over our coffees on the terraces of the two or three cafés that boasted these popular gathering places. A bright, smiling afternoon. The Cours Napoleon full of its strolling crowd in holiday attire and mood. Little girls were playing conjuring tricks with their balls, as they loved to do, tossing two or three into the air one after the other and catching them as they whirled rapidly, little boys industriously hopping at hop-scotch on the chalked squares of the cluttered pavements; talk flowed smoothly, there was somewhere the sound of church music that came faintly. Then, suddenly, sharply, the report of a pistol, from just round the corner up the little street leading to the post office.

Silence fell, and a moment's immobility. Then there was the rush of a number of men who stood or sat nearest the sound; chairs were overturned, drinks left standing. It was toward, not from, the shot that they ran, while the rest stood staring.

Presently down the little street came a group of six men on whose shoulders lay a limp figure. They came slowly, carefully, and turned toward the hospital.

Chairs were again occupied, whispers fell and rose a bit, the crowd resumed its motion, the shuffle of feet, the murmur of talk began again. Their's not to question why! Unhealthy to get mixed up in a killing. It was some time before a gendarme appeared, passed to the scene of the crime, reappeared and was gone. Nothing, so far as we discovered, was ever done. The young man



King Carnival himself, bearing a remarkable likeness to the Mayor of the town

died in the hospital, his slayer walked away into the *maquis*, untouched, unhindered. There he will stay till he considers it safe to give himself up, or to go home, or until the vendetta makes him pay for a life with his life. The incident was not alluded to by any of the local papers.

Shocking? Yes. But Corsican history explains the why of the vendetta, and once such a custom is firmly fastened on a people it is difficult to eradicate. In the famous days of the Genoese occupation, which endured more than four centuries, and especially during the last two hundred years of this miserable rule, there was no such thing as justice to be had under the venal governors and their train of looters and scoundrels. Everything was for sale. If a man murdered anyone, he had only to pay enough to go free. If his victim's family had more money than he, he might be banished or imprisoned, but he was soon back from banishment or out of prison, could he but promise a little gold or give a scrap of land to the oppressor. It was even possible to buy letters of grace permitting the purchaser to commit any contemplated crime with the assurance of immunity. So, by degrees, the Corsicans took over the management of justice, and undertook to secure with the stiletto or the pistol what the law would not give. A vicious system—but better than the cynical buying and selling that had forced it upon an oppressed people.

One day we watched Ajaccio put out a fire.

The burning house stood on the quay, and a chain of bucket carriers were busy pouring sea water into a tank

that must have been dragged up for the occasion. Into this tank was sunk a hosepipe, with a pump attachment, worked by two men. From the business end of the hose, considerably attenuated through the fact that it leaked in a hundred spots, came a thin stream of water which was being directed on the blaze with a spluttery result. Excitement was keen, but not noisy. The bucket workers sauntered back and forth, eyes on the smoke and flame bursting from upper windows, the two men who pumped, hot and tired, stopped now and then to brush the sweat off their faces, the hose-manipulators, stern and business-like, stuck to the job, hopeless as it looked. From the crowd came an occasional suggestion: "There, *mon vieux*, that does it!" "Here, see, it bursts from yet another window!" "Come, drag that piece of furniture out of the way!" The house was very old, built of course of stone, and presently the flames died down, having burnt up all they could lay hold of that was inflammable. The hose was neatly curled, the firemen and the buckets disappeared, only the tank and the gaping blackened windows of the house remained to tell the tale.

A primitive little place, Ajaccio, but lovable. It was pleasant to buy in the fruit market of the sad-faced, black-clothed women, who could smile so sweetly and who always sold to you at the prevailing price, without bargaining. Pleasant to see the peasants in the evenings sitting at the long dark wooden tables in the tiny cabarets, pleasant, too, to pass along garden walls where the nightingales sang and innumerable perfumes floated down from hedges of heliotrope, orange and lemon trees in bloom, jasmine and beds of silver lilies, and rose every-

where, yellow, white and pink, deep crimson, red, growing in sprays and singly, climbing high or standing stiffly in little trees.

Wonderful when the moon was shining on the gulf, having risen above the stately line of the hills, the brilliant southern moon that made a magic day of night, glamorous and delicate, wonderful to walk to the Parata, where the Sanguinary Islands continued the protecting sweep of the cape between the gulf and the sea, four dark, barren masses on the highest of which the lighthouse stood and swung its intermittent beam, with the white semaphore station close by. So soft the air, so fresh and sweet, so deserted the whole world of black and silver!

But the very situation that makes of Ajaccio a perfect winter resort, its shelter from the western and northern winds by the hills that rise behind it, its frontage to the south, makes it too windless, too stifling, in the warm season. The dust is a constant irritation, and the town, too, begins to get decidedly smelly. Time to go.

Before taking permanent leave we decided to make the southern trip to Bonifacio we had promised ourselves, a matter of two or three days, then to gather up our belongings and make for the mountains and for the north end of the island, Cap Corse, which is exposed to the full freshness of the Mediterranean winds.

The sirocco had been blowing two days when we came to this resolution, bringing its suffocating heat and mugginess. But the morning we were to take the post bus dawned clear and cool, shining like a bubble of light, after a night of heavy rain.

"Take your time," ought to be the motto of the Cor-

sican omnibuses. The one we were to take, which would carry us as far as Sartene, was scheduled to leave at seven. We were on time, but we were alone. Neither bus nor other passengers had made an appearance.

In about a quarter of an hour the bus clattered up, a ladder was leaned against it and loading began.

By degrees an incredible amount of stuff was packed away on the roof. Straw trunks, leather trunks, wooden boxes, sacks, many queerly shaped bundles wrapped in paper or canvas, baskets, valises, a cage of fowls, bags of mail, these arriving last of all in a handcart from the post office, forty-five minutes after the hour for starting. Meanwhile the passengers had been getting aboard, and the bus was almost full when we began to move. But we had only progressed a dozen yards along the Cours Napoleon before an excited man dashed towards us, shouting to the chauffeur, who instantly put on the brakes. There was a consultation between the two, which resulted in our pulling up to the curb in front of our old domicile, the Hotel Solferino. Here the excited man seated himself at a small table on the sidewalk and began wolfing down a huge cup of coffee stuffed with bread.

Evidently we were to wait for him to get his breakfast. At the rate he was going it couldn't take long, and we all sat in patience, with eyes fixed upon him. He finished.

Once again he conferred with the driver, who now, with his companion, the mail carrier, got down from the bus and disappeared into a neighboring café. The excited man hurried off down a side street. Driver and mail carrier returned, wiping their mouths on their

sleeves, gazed up and down the street, shrugged their shoulders, smiled upon us, and waited.

The man returned, slowly, despondent, apologetic. We continued to wait.

Suddenly the chauffeur made a gesture expressing finality. He climbed aboard, so did the man and the mail carrier, and we moved slowly on. But with an inarticulate cry the excited man leaped from his seat, waved at the chauffeur, and disappeared down a second side street. We continued to move slowly on for a few yards, and then again drew up by the curb. We waited.

Then a new man arrived, suitcase in hand, and climbed aboard. Had the driver, he wanted to know, seen Monsieur Chose?

But of course the driver had. *Nom d'un nom!* Wasn't Chose at that moment rushing like a madman through the streets seeking for the very one who was inquiring? Come, it was enough!

And we started. Just as we got under way there was a yell and the excited man came plunging through the door of a house just behind us. He gained the bus and climbed to a seat beside the latest comer. Everyone made delighted sounds, laughed, exclaimed to each other and to the driver. *Enfin*, we could get ahead!

We did so for another hundred yards, where we halted at the city customs building while an official came leisurely towards us, propped himself against the chauffeur's seat and conversed. Here we remained for another fifteen minutes. Our Anglo-Saxon minds wondered why we hadn't gone there directly and let the belated travelers

who had held us up so long join us there. It would have saved a good bit of time.

But what is time in Corsica?

Our course took us by way of Cauro, where we turned to the right instead of following on up to Bastelica, and climbed straight toward the crest of the range heaped to the south. It was a superbly scenic road, a tumbled array of mountains and valleys, wild white streams and falls, green forests, plunging slopes, picturesque villages clinging to mountain-sides as a wasps' nest sticks to the eaves of a shed. At Cauro our chauffeur, who was a lank old man with grizzled moustache and beard, wearing the inevitable corduroy waistcoat and collarless, full-sleeved shirt, but no coat, once again withdrew into the nearest café. He came out, wiping his mouth as before, tore open the hood of the car and plunged, sighing heavily, into its vitals.

"You are late today," observed one of the loungers collected to greet us.

"Am I not always late? Is there any possible way for me not to be late? Does not everyone retard the getting away? And I, who carry the mails! *Sacré nom d'un chien*, what a life!"

He banged shut the hood, started the engine, climbed aboard and we were off, to the shrill whoop of a very small boy almost hidden under an American Boy Scout hat, who raced beside us for a block.

More climbing, till we reached the pass of St-Georges, almost three thousand feet above the sea. Used as we were getting to views, this one made us gasp.

There were the green slopes of the fragrant *maquis*,

long, slender, falling valleys golden with grain or patched with vineyards, forests of chestnut, pine and beech, there were snow peaks piercing the pale blue-lavender sky, dark gorges from which rose the song of water in swift motion, wild rocks and barren stretches close about us. Downward the white road wove its way between hills and precipices, took sharp turns, vanished to appear again far below. After a brief pause while the engine cooled, we began sliding down these loops, and in no time at all reached Ste-Marie-Sichet, once known as Santa-Maria-d'Ornano, where Vannina, wife to Sampiero, was born. This whole smiling country had belonged to the Ornano family, who still own the tall, worn, shabby house with vestiges of towers rising above the roof where the little Vannina, whose destiny was so tragic, must have played as a child.

We were to stop here twenty minutes, so everyone got out. It looked like a scene in a light opera. The fascinating village hanging along the edge of its green hillside in that unbelievable scenery, with its ancient stone houses, its terrace overlooking the far valley, protected by a stone balustrade, where two donkeys, loaded to the ears, grazed on the herbage that pushed up between the stones, while a mother goat and her two kids stood poised on the wall above that dizzy drop, casually regarding us. The men, always picturesque, were grouped about the chauffeur, who was talking animatedly, women came and went with green jars or bundles of faggots on their heads, in the middle distance two of them kneeled washing clothes in the gutter—at any instant it seemed probable that the

crowd would suddenly brandish arms and burst into a chorus.

To stay in one of these mountain villages would be impossible. They are entirely innocent of plumbing even of the most rudimentary description. If it weren't for the running water that comes rushing from the heights above, and the strong sweet wind blowing in from the sea, they would be plague spots. But how beautiful, how amazingly individual, they are! Not the less so because this is accident. The Corsican shows no sign of caring for beauty. No flowers are planted in the little gardens or kept in pots to brighten windows. It is nature that does the business. The walls of crumbling granite are a fine foothold for wild flowers and vines, even fig trees hanging to them. The formation of the ground makes the arrangement of the houses unexpected, striking. Streets are more often steps than not, arched doorways and glimpses of courtyards are caught as you pass along, and the churches, left by Italian builders of the centuries gone, or copied from these models, are singularly graceful and satisfactory. The only sign of modern life in these places is the schoolhouse, often a new building, though sometimes it is a wing of the old townhall. All Corsican children go to school—at least until the age of eight or ten.

But the driver has made his usual café call, and now he sounds the horn and we all hurry back, some tearing themselves with embraces from friends, others appearing with new bundles, everybody animated and interested.

We are off again, the road winding down like the flight of a bird. We take it with a rush. Our chauffeur seems

to be in better spirits, and to have grown more daring. He is taking the corners close and letting her out. Suddenly he bursts into a chant, slow, sad, an endless sort of thing that reminds me of the Cowboy's Lament, "Oh, bury me not on the lone prairie."

We sweep round one turn almost into a herd of cows, fastened together with chains and ropes attached to their horns, to stop with a grinding of brakes. Inextricable confusion arises, the two herders doing their darndest to keep the frightened animals on the road, and to disentangle them. We make comments, laugh, the herders laugh back. At last the cows are got by, and one of the herders, a handsome youngster with brilliant black eyes, leaps to the footboard to get a light from the driver's cigarette, then drops off with a wave of the hand and a "*Bon voyage, Messieurs-dames.*"

The valley down whose flank we have been zig-zagging gets narrower and narrower, till we reach its bottom and cross the river, to begin climbing again as far as Olmeto, another delightful village that is particularly beautiful as we look back at it, nestled among dark trees and hanging over the deep valley. Across on a commanding rock are the ruins of an old château belonging to the de Rocca family, who had done great things in Corsica during the end of the XIV and the beginning of the XV centuries, when Arrigo de Rocca, fighting under the auspices of the King of Arragon, Dom Pedro, conquered the island and made himself its master for a few years. After his death a nephew and a natural son of his struggled between each other for sovereignty, one with the backing of Arragon, the other under the Genoese, each calling

themselves Counts of Corsica, each having his following among the islanders. In the end the de Rocca family was ruined, the last of them dying in Sardinia.

From here we came again into sight of the sea, the purple gulf of Varinco, sometimes called Valinco, where Sampiero landed, lying almost directly below, with the old port of Propriana at its foot. We swept down to the town and found it quite a sizable place, with a number of paved streets, plenty of cafés, several hotels and a row of shops. It is an important trading place, serving the country back as far as Sartene and beyond, and there is a regular steamboat service between it and Ajaccio. It was once a favorite landing-place for the pirates from the African coast, who came to rob and murder, and for centuries it was harassed by the contending Pisans and Genoese, who had each been given half of the island by the Pope, at that period temporal master of Corsica, and who each wanted the other's half. Now it is a peaceful, prosperous-looking little place and seemed to be unusually clean.

From here we turned inland again and presently crossed the Rizzanesi river on an old wooden bridge that is called by the name of the Bridge of the White Queen, who, so I heard, was queen of Arragon at the time Arragon meddled in Corsican affairs. But I won't vouch for this. A little further along, however, are the two great menhirs called the Monk and the Nun, close beside the river. They resemble shrouded human figures and the popular legend runs that they were a monk from Sartene and the nun in a nearby convent, who had fallen in love and made their escape. Stopping to rest by the

Rizzanese they were turned by an avenging Deity into the two rocks that remain there forever as a sign and a warning.

We left the river and climbed briskly again, *lacet* after *lacet*, through cultivated country, vineyards, olive orchards, gardens in terraces. Every now and again a snowy cupola surmounting some family tomb, looked out across the country from a frame of cypresses.

One last tough scramble and we rolled into Sartene, mountain-built with the effect of a fortress as you reach it from this side. We had made up a lot of time and were little more than a half hour late.

Sartene only dates from sometime in the XVI century, the old quarter remaining pretty much in its medieval state. There is a new quarter, roomier, if uglier, for the modern villa as it shows there has little that is attractive to the eye. We went up the narrow old main street ending in the church square, a rectangle where the church with its fine tall tower, the *mairie*, or city hall, and the *préfecture* lend dignity and an old world quality.

Think of a hotel called *César and the Universe!* That was the name of the one where we lunched, served by a large blonde Russian of polished manners and an engaging smile. The hotel itself was extremely inconspicuous, but it has a magnificent view over the valley of the Rizzanese and the splendid mountain ranges to the east and north with their saw-tooth crests. We ate good food with our eyes on great things, and drank a fine wine to that mighty sculpturing.

Sartene has had the usual troubles of a Corsican town,

raids by pirates being the most frequent. During one of these more than four hundred persons were taken from the town to be sold as slaves. Incidentally, both the Romans and the Saracens left witness to the effect that it was not possible to make a good slave of a Corsican. Either he committed suicide rather than endure slavery, or died of a broken heart, or remained sullen and inert, refusing obedience and service no matter under what compulsion. "Their masters regretted the purchase, no matter how little the sum paid" it was said.

But there had been a later disturbance than these old tragedies. Between 1830-40 a bitter feud existed between two sections of the town, based on political differences. Not Verona itself in the time of the Montagues and Capulets knew more frequent bloody brawls and wild affrays. Shootings and killings were daily affairs, and the whole place lived in terror. What it was that finally reconciled the two factions no one seems to remember. Perhaps some romance as touching as that of Romeo and Juliet only waits the teller to move the heart of the world.

We had time after eating to saunter about in the old quarter, with its narrow alleys, its connecting flights of damp stone steps, its arched ways and tall, dark old buildings that seem never to have known the sun. They were filled with people, who peered down from the narrow windows or sat in the doorways. Over all the church brooded, ringing a sonorous bell as the hours went by. There are clocks today in most Corsican churches, but not so long ago these were rare, and almost everywhere we saw sundials painted on the walls of village churches, once the only means of approximating the time.

We were but half an hour late in starting on the next and final lap of our trip, in a new bus guided by a sturdy young man with a smile for everyone. Immediately we found ourselves in utterly different country. Wild rocks that varied from the size of a house to that of a man's head were piled and scattered in strange confusion as far as the eye could see. Now and then some sudden green valley lay like a streak of vivid paint amid the dun desolation, but these grew rarer, till an occasional wind-whipped tree made the only break. Queer forms these rocks took, and two of the men, who sat beside the driver just in front of us, delighted in pointing out some of them. There was a lion, lying at ease on top of a great hill of piled rock, and again two elephants shouldered along side by side, grey and immense, uncannily real. At last they pointed out the Man of Cagna of whom I have spoken, high on a peak of the Cagna Range. He must be indeed gigantic, and is a strange, impressive figure against the sky.

All this time we were having trouble with the engine. Fortunately the road was fairly level, but there were some sharp rises, and on each of these the car stuck. The chauffeur and the two men with him got out each time, fussed and worried, at last getting the thing to go again. At a bleak little village called Pianatolla we made a long stop while a wheel was changed. Time rolled on but we did not. Before we left we were acquainted with half the town, J. M. had been invited into the café by two of our fellow travelers and then invited to join a game of *boule* being played by a group of men. He didn't know how, so he contented himself with looking on and

talking politics. Corsica was at the time much stirred up over the Coty election, Coty, who is no other than the perfumer known quite as well to Fifth Avenue as to Ajaccio, having been ousted from the Senate because he was said to have too openly used his wealth and the assistance of the bandit Romanetti to get there, and who was now once more before his constituency. Meanwhile I chatted with a couple of women who shared with me some little cakes of their own baking, and who told me that life was getting more expensive day by day and wanted to know when the Germans would pay the reparations they owed; occasionally they paused in their talk to shoo off the village idiot, a painful object, dreadfully crippled, twisted, pitiful, but who seemed perfectly happy and much amused at the struggles of the half-dozen men helping with the wheel.

Not far beyond Pianatolla we struck the white chalk formation of the Bonifacio country, and also the gray and weatherbeaten cork-trees that make of the landscape a drab and cheerless thing for several long miles. The cork oak is a good deal like the live oak, and in happier surroundings becomes a magnificent tree, apparently quite undisturbed at having its bark ripped off from root to upper branches every three years. But here they are frightfully battered by the winds and have little nourishment in the chalky soil.

Another long slope presently faced us. The car struggled a quarter of the way up, and then with a shuddering gasp, stopped dead.

The group of three once more precipitated itself upon the engine, but this time they could get no results. At

last one of them had a sudden inspiration, and followed it. He was right in his hunch. There was not a drop of gasoline in the tank—or in the car!

Here was a fine state of affairs! Everyone got out, and conversation was general. But all the talk in the world wouldn't make the car move, so at last the chauffeur set off on foot for Bonifacio.

"It is not more than three or four kilometres from here," he said, "and if I can find a bicycle on which to return I will be back within the hour." We watched him slowly disappear over the top of the long slope.

Next a tall, grim-looking young man who had sat on the seat with us all the way from Sartene, and who looked like a Swede, set off in pursuit, carrying his knapsack. We let him get a good start, and took the road ourselves, glad enough really of a chance to walk through the evening loveliness. The chalky road was bordered by high walls quite covered with wild honeysuckle, white roses and green vines. A delicate sweetness filled the air. The only drawback was the straightness of the road. No walker likes a straight road. It is against nature, with her mysteries and her beguilings. To the walker the shortest line between any two points is always the winding one.

But we had no chance to get tired of the forthright route before we found ourselves at our hotel, for we were not staying within the walled city of Bonifacio, having been advised that it was rather too utterly medieval in habits as well as appearance to be tolerable. Our hostel sat beside the road, backed by a long hill thickly covered with trees, looking very white and attractive in

the sunset light, which was making a kind of halo behind the hill. The hotel, also called the Etrangers, stood in a pretty garden, with a terra-cotta terrace in front on which were tables and chairs.

We proved to be the only guests, which was as well, since the arrangement of the rooms is somewhat peculiar. There are two sets of three rooms opening one from the other. To get into the last of each row of three you had to pass through the other two. During the more crowded season this occasioned some embarrassment. On one occasion, the story having come back to us at Ajaccio, two honeymooners had the first of one of these sets of three, a supposedly very prim old maid, an Englishwoman, the second, and a stiff old bachelor, also English, the last. When the Englishwoman came to retire she found the honeymooners, who were French, already in their bed. They appeared to think her intrusion unnecessary, and she hurried through to her own room muttering apologies. Hardly was she in bed when her door burst open and the Englishman entered, evidently eager to get the door shut behind him. The light of his candle fell on the face of the old maid, peering at him over the bedclothes, and he stopped to explain that he had come in because there was no way but that to get to his own bally room, since he wasn't able to climb in by the window.

She snapped at him that, instead of explaining that he didn't want to be there, he might continue on his way and get out, upon which, clutching his candle tightly, he made for his own door. But:

"Seein' my spirit lamp standing on the table what did

he do but ask if I couldn't make him a cup of tea in the morning, before the bus left at five, since the hotel wouldn't give us anything. Yes, my dear! And by this time I was so used to seein' him in my room that I told him I would and asked how many lumps of sugar he liked. And next morning I made tea for the two of us and handed him his cup through the door, quite as though it were the proper thing." So she ended the story when she got back to her friends in Ajaccio.

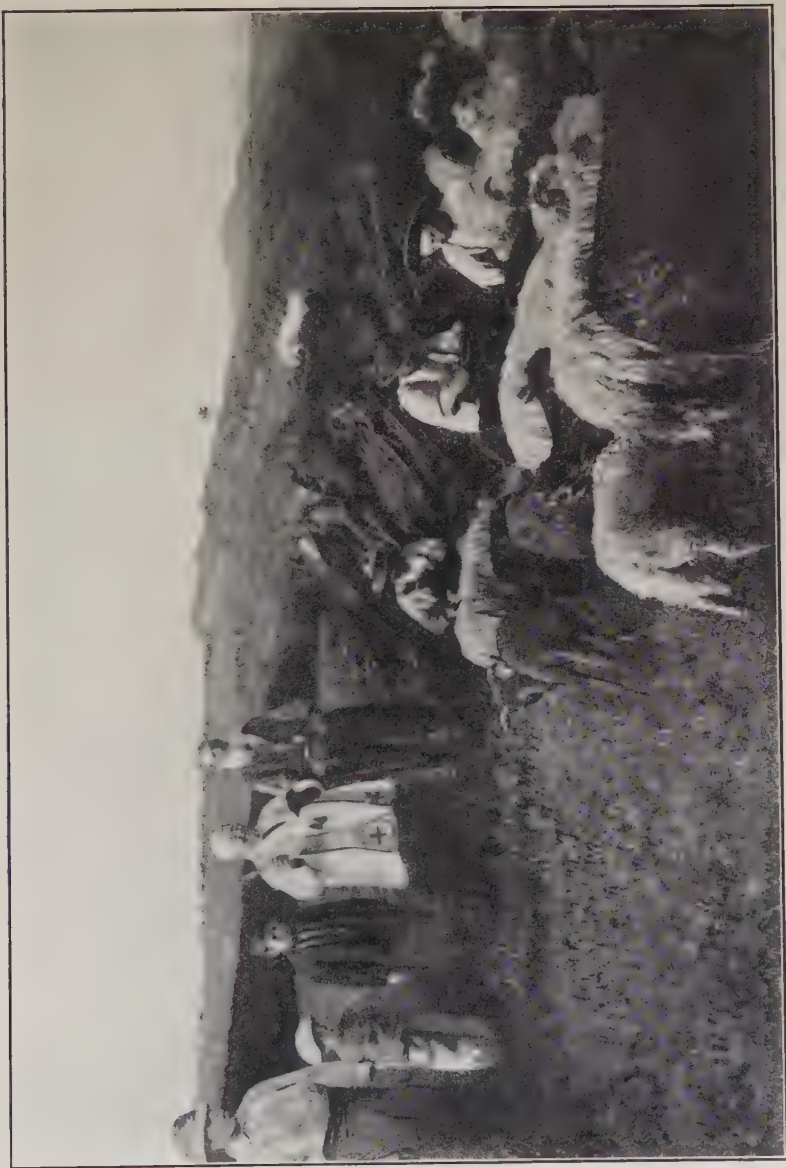
We were eating our dinner in the garden when the bus arrived after more than an hour's delay. The chauffeur looked somewhat shame-faced.

"It was a droll of a thing to forget the essence," he said, as he canted our bag from the roof, together with a package of canvases and painting materials which we disclaimed but which he insisted on leaving; we discovered later that they belonged to the grim Swede. "But who has not his moment of forgetfulness? And the walk was not bad, eh?"

We assured him that we had enjoyed it, and the bus rolled away, the remaining passengers wishing us good evening. None of them seemed at all disturbed by the long delay they had been forced to endure. Traveling by omnibus in Corsica is just one delay after another, and if such things trouble you, it is better to stay at home.

Dinner over we decided to get our first look at Bonifacio by the cool green twilight that filled the sky, already sprinkled with stars. A shoulder of the hill hid both town and harbor until we were almost upon them. Then, across the water, we saw the little city high against the

sky on its precipitous rock, a thing unique, unchanged relic of a thousand years ago, amazing, beautiful, belonging to a world that has vanished as completely as the men who made it.



Blessing the sheep-shearing

CHAPTER IX

BUILD THY CITY ON A ROCK

BONIFACIO has a little history all its own, different from the rest of the island, on which it occupies so remote and isolated a spot. They tell you, too, that its citizens are different. They are gentler, the vendetta has never been known among them, the dialect is different, their women do not work in the fields or carry burdens. During the olive harvest, to be sure, the entire city, men, women and children, go off early each morning with their donkeys, mules and carts, to come back at night with the day's gathering, laughing and singing, making a festival of the work. Otherwise the men do all the outside labor.

The old chronicles relate that in the year 828 Bonifacio, Marquis of Toscani, was appointed Count of Corsica and Defender of that Island by the emperor Lothair, under the consent of the Pope, temporal master of both Corsica and Sardinia. Returning from a successful foray against the Saracens in that same year, he founded the city called after his name on the high promontory opposite Sardinia. His son Adalbert carried on his work and his title, and from these two came the long line of Pisan defenders who for several centuries disputed possession of Corsica with the Genoese. Bonifacio developed into a small independent state by the eleventh century, however, just how is not made clear, and devoted itself with great success to the profession of piracy.

The Pisans were having a hot time of it with the Genoese all this while and were gradually being pushed off the island. Toward the end of the twelfth century Genoa managed to capture Bonifacio, the gates being opened to her soldiers while the commander of the city was celebrating a gorgeous marriage feast.

Genoa took no chances of losing her capture. She cleared it of all or most of its pirate inhabitants and colonized it with her own people, granting special privileges to these, with gifts of money and prizes for each son and daughter born to the families. She took care to settle good workers and craftsmen in the little city, and gave them laws of a beneficent character, some of which are still in force.

Through all the vicissitudes that followed, Bonifacio remained Genoese and appears to have suffered very little from the numerous raids and invasions that made all the rest of Corsica an everlasting battlefield.

In the magic light of the late evening the pale walls of this ancient city rose before us with an effect of solidity and power that gave an impression of everlastingness. Twice before I had known a like impression, once when I first looked at the giant sequoias of California, and again on seeing the Moses of Michael Angelo. Deserts, mountains, the sea, do not yield this feeling of eternity, I don't know why. Perhaps there must be some sense of contrast with their kind. Cities and statues and trees spring up and vanish—but here were a tree, a statue and a city immune to time. Bonifacio looked as though the centuries fell on it like snowflakes, to melt without a mark.

It is built on a promontory of calcareous, chalky-white rock stained a pale gray by the weather, and splashed with faint tints of lavender and umber. This rock lies in strata, and has been undercut by the water, by which it is surrounded on all but the western end, where it joins the mainland in a narrow neck. The city walls rise straight up from the rock, and mingle the same hues, with umber predominating.

We stood on the only bit of level land, on the shore of what seemed a lake, but was really the harbor. To our left the promontory piled its abrupt precipitous sides, crowned by the city walls. To our right another precipice swept in a curve that jutted beyond the point of the promontory, with the effect of completely encircling the mirror-smooth water in a high frame of white rock. Behind us a narrow valley rose to steep hills.

At the foot of the promontory a narrow stretch of paved land made the "marine" of the city. Here is the quay, alongside which a large steamer can dock, for the water is extremely deep. A row of shallow houses stands jammed against the rock, where fisher folk live; there was a café or two with little tables scattered on the broad flags; nets were spread out to dry; children raced about in some game, laughing and calling to each other. Lights shone in the windows of the houses, and the little shops where tackle, paints, boat stuff of all kinds, with provisions, were for sale, had their doors hospitably open. In the motionless water everything was reflected, the long points of light, the pale walls, the dark spots, the boats that lay so still.

There are two ways to enter Bonifacio. Either the

ramp, that starts from the end of the quay at the neck of land, which leads to the New Gate, and by which all wheeled traffic must go, or the long flight of shallow wide steps that begins halfway down the quay, opposite the only fountain of sweet water near Bonifacio, and leads to the Old Gate. We took that way.

There are houses, tall, dim, shabby, on either side of this great flight of steps, up which mules and donkeys are led. The lights and life of the quay did not follow us up, though one or two lamps shed a bit of illumination. Over a drawbridge under a heavy portcullis we passed into a sort of guard-house or donjon with immensely thick stone walls. A second drawbridge led to the city itself, and crossing it we found ourselves in a tiny square. Over the gate through which we had come we were able to make out an inscription in Latin testifying that it was built in 1548 by Pompeus Justinus.

Narrow streets led here and there, very dim in the faint light of the few lamps that jutted from walls on occasional corners. The place was like a stone maze. We went slowly along the one broader street before us, glancing down the side alleys that climbed steps, disappeared under arches and into courts, or turned abruptly out of sight. Though it was not much after nine the city seemed asleep or deserted. Now and then some shadowy figure passed us, and in a few shops figures stood, lighted by a single oil lamp, while here and there a face peered from a window or a woman sat with a child in a dark arched doorway.

Above us the high walls of the houses almost met, showing the merest strip of sky with a star or two. The

street, stone paved, without a sidewalk, rang hollowly to our tread. We seemed the only living creatures in a town of ghosts.

Suddenly we came out into an open place, with broken ground under foot. It was too dark to see where we stepped. Ahead of us rose a tower and pale buildings showed beyond. This was the citadel and military quarter, which, with the cemetery, occupies two-thirds of that small promontory. The other third is the city proper, where, squeezed together and piled above each other, live the three thousand inhabitants.

We turned back, taking one of the small side streets beyond a church or chapel whose finely carved abutments shouldered out into the way. Soon we reached another open space, and leaning over the wall that bounded it looked down at the sea, three hundred feet below. We overhung it, for Bonifacio bulges over its foundations, and as we looked at the restless water beating against the barrier that opposed it, it seemed not unlikely that that very instant might be the last in the life of the old town—it might sink at once into the deep, complete as it stood, with all its people, like another Ys, its bells ringing with the tides, its towers almost rearing their crests above the wave, its streets threaded only by the strange creatures of the sea.

We moved away and presently and inexplicably found ourselves at the New Gate, which is only a very little younger than the old one. Here too was a great portcullis and a drawbridge, and then the steep descent of the ramp. Up this road came a few stragglers, young fellows hurrying and chattering, old men on donkey-back,

who stared at us questioningly from above long gray beards. Wrapped in cloaks, silent, with bent heads they went by.

We made our way back to our hotel with ghostly time at our elbow and the centuries heavy upon us. Bonifacio seems older than any other ancient town left in this world, it is so unchanged, its stones are so undisturbed, its streets so worn by the brushing of endless generations. It is the incarnation of changeless age with no memory of youth and no mark of decay—age, with all its moving, terrifying beauty.

Our rooms overlooked the road, and next morning, before five, I was waked from what had been somewhat uneasy slumber by a sudden outburst of talk. It went on and on, and at last I got up and looked out of the window. The red-headed maid who had waited on us the evening before was expressing herself with the violence that belonged to her coloring, directing her remarks to a young man who leaned against a donkey, smoking a cigarette, his eyes on the heavens, where dawn was about her mysteries. His attitude expressed easy endurance. But suddenly, tossing aside the stub of his cigarette, he hit the donkey a blow with his open hand, at the same time making the peculiar sound of the Corsican driver who wants his animal to stand still—a brrrrrrrrrr, long-drawn out. The subtle intention was not missed by the girl.

She flounced aside, slammed the gate loudly, and then the door of the hotel on her retreating back. The young man looked after her, spat, grunted to the donkey, which



Bonifacio seems older than any other town left in this world

immediately set off up the road with quick, short steps. The two disappeared beyond the turning.

I returned to bed, but not to sleep. No chance. That had been but the overture to the full chorus. From then on a procession moved steadily along the road, going forth to its labors in the olive orchards or fields or cork harvesting. There was a steady jingling of bells, the rattle of wheels, shouts, talk, a constant slamming of doors in the hotel, and the shuffle of feet and rattle of dishes as many who stopped were given coffee on the terra-cotta terrace. By six we gave up the contest and got out ourselves.

My sleep had not been disturbed by ghosts from Bonifacio. It was several ferocious fleas who had done the job. And now I discovered, as we sat taking our own coffee on that attractive terrace, that the place was a hunting field for the creatures. I could see them walking about on it! From then on my entrance into or exit from the hotel was accomplished in a highly speedy and acrobatic manner, the idea being not to touch the terrace with more than the point of one foot, so hurling myself through the door. The scheme worked fairly well, but it did not make me anxious to linger over our departure. We planned to spend that day and night where we were, and to take the P. L. M. bus at noon next day back to Ajaccio. This was a special bus run twice a week for tourists which stopped at Bonifacio for a few hours of sight-seeing. We had been told that there would be no trouble getting seats since the bus had been running only half full for the past ten days or so, the season growing late.

We were still sitting over our breakfast, having moved into the garden, when the grim Swede appeared, looking much grimmer. The one night at the Hotel de France in town had done for him, for he entered, knapsack on shoulder, and evidently took the other suite of three rooms, for the next moment he came out again, sans baggage, and was served with coffee on the terrace. I had a notion he might become restless there, too.

The red-haired maid confided to us that he was an artist, and the canvases left at the house were his.

"He did not remember them until this morning, when behold, they were not! And now he and they are here. It all tumbles precisely right."

Bonifacio shimmered in the sunlight like a city built of pale gold. The harbor was deeply, brilliantly blue, and utterly calm. The carved and ridged cliffs that framed it were doubled in the wave; hardly might one separate the image from the reality. On the quay life was in full swing. The fountain was surrounded, the nets were stretched flat on the stones and being mended, rowboats were being overhauled, donkeys trotted about with their masters at their heels. Above all brooded the lofty walls of the fortress town, and the air was full of wheeling gulls, crying their eerie, unhappy call.

We climbed again the mossy steps to the city. It did not lose its quality of ancient beauty under the sun, though some of the dark mystery of those narrow alleys and covered courts was gone. There are two streets running lengthwise, one only possible to wheels, the one that enters by the New Gate and brings up before the Hotel

de France at the Place de Fondaco, the only square of the least pretension to size. The rest turn into steps or plunge up and down through covered ways that run under the upper stories of the houses. Underfoot are small round stones set close together, polished and flattened by time and use, except on the two longer streets that are paved with slabs of granite.

We walked first to the citadel, past the hospital founded in the XIII century by a group of rich and charitable citizens, still used for its original purpose. Near it is the Church of St. Dominique, built in the same century by the Knights Templar. Its fine octagonal tower has been restored, and looks too new for the rest of the old pile, which is of exquisite proportions, simple, with a carved border running under the eaves in which are repeated the lamb and other symbols of the Order. The interior is partly Gothic, partly Romanesque, much restored. There are two magnificent groups of carved wood, one a descent from the cross, the other a martyrdom, that date from early times.

Another, very small church, stands at the corner of the cemetery, for which it serves as a chapel. This is the old church of St. François, built about 1430. There is little of interest inside, except the tombs of an archbishop of Ajaccio, who died in 1457, Raphael Spinola, and of the citizen of Bonifacio, Philippe Cattaciolo, whose distinction resides in the fact that he entertained the Emperor Charles Quint on the occasion of that monarch's Corsican visit.

The cemetery is crowded with stone tombs and wire and bead wreaths. A ruin with picturesque arches and

walls that adjoins it is the remains of a monastery once belonging to the Templars.

There are several other buildings on this end of the plateau, all now devoted to military purposes. There is a well too, called artesian, but apparently a seepage from the sea. The water is only used in emergencies. On the seaside, zig-zagging dizzily down, is a narrow flight of steps cut into the face of the cliff. This bears the name of the King of Arragon, and is said to have been built under his direction during the brief time when Arragon dominated in Corsica. It was used to revictual the garrison in case of a land blockade.

The end of the promontory is terraced and defended by cannon. From here we got a magnificent view of the broad sweep of the sea, with the hazy heights and faint blues and grays and greens of Sardinia directly south. The Straits of Bonifacio is the name given to this portion of the Mediterranean. Looking north-west the bold headlands of the Corsican coast stretched one behind another till the distance claimed them, while north-eastward mountains rose. Directly below was the intense indigo of the open sea, or, on the other side, the brilliant turquoise of the harbor. Behind us the irregular outline of the old city massed together with the effect of being one great building, a castle for some mythical giant from fairy lore.

We made the loop of this part of the promontory and came back to the town through its oldest quarter, past the ruined castello that once served as a lookout. A tiny street called the Rue Doria led us, past a number of fine old houses, one with a beautifully carved façade and

portal, to the church of Sainte-Marie-Majeur, built by the Pisans. It is entirely without ornament, except for a very fine tower and a great loggia supported on huge soaring pillars. There are buttresses high overhead between the church and the near buildings serving partly for support and partly as water conduits. There is a huge cistern under the loggia, but one rather hates to imagine what the water must be like. At the time we were there and for a couple of months before, there was no water left in the city at all, so we were told, and all it used had to be brought up from the fountain on the quay, or from springs inland. All day there was a procession of donkeys loaded with casks, and of mules drawing carts filled with hogsheads, bringing in water.

The Loggia was once the central meeting place of the town, used for political discussions and speeches. Only a week or two before our arrival there had been another such meeting. A certain group of citizens who had, or thought they had, cause for complaint, went to the City Hall to harangue the mayor. He ordered them out and forbade them to hold a meeting, but they went to the old Loggia and continued the row there. The Ajaccien papers were full of the affair and much amused at the mayor's inability to stop his people from talking.

The church contains a bit of the true cross, which is kept in the sacristy enclosed in a reliquary with two keys, one held by the curé, the other by the mayor. On three days of the year, Good Friday, May 3 and September 14, this relic is taken in solemn procession through the town and out beyond the cemetery to the terrace overlooking the Straits, where the sea is blessed. Also in times of

great storm the citizens form in procession and go to the City Hall, where they are joined by the mayor, all then proceeding to the church, to be met by the curé. Then again the relic is carried forth and while the priests and people recite prayers it is once more lifted above the sea, to calm the fury of the elements.

The curé joined us as we wandered about, pointing out a fine marble statue of St. Francis dating from early in the Middle Ages, and the font, made out of a monolith that was once an ancient cenotaph. A pleasant, friendly man, who made us promise to let him know if there were anything he could do for us.

Near the church is the house where Charles Quint stayed, with carved door and old inscription. And that, so far as detail goes, is all there is to see in Bonifacio. It is the city itself that is the monument. In it I got, as never before, the impression of a medieval city, close-guarded within its mighty walls. The consciousness of that past life, lived always under the threat of attack, of sudden death, came strongly. We walked round those walls, by the footway that clings to them, slitted for observation and defense. The soldiers of Genoa might have passed only that instant ahead of us.

We left the town by the New Gate and made our way down the ramp. At its first turn stands a small chapel, the Chapelle St. Roch. It was built in the year 1528 on the spot where the last victim of the great plague, which killed two-thirds of the inhabitants of Corsica, fell dead.

Before going back to the hotel we walked over to look at the cork factory, fourth in importance in the whole of France, which stands at the foot of the ramp in the flat end of the little valley. It was a most casual and easy-going place. Under some tumble-down sheds at one side were a dozen young men, talking at the tops of their voices, laughing, singing, and all scraping the broad flat pieces of bark, which had been taken from the boiling vat and left to dry in huge piles all over the untidy yard. Just beyond them in a small round room was the boiling vat, with one man to overlook it. The bark bobbed in the great tank, and smelt very corky. This man told us to go on through the yard to a stairway that would take us to the story above, where we could see the finishing processes.

In a huge loft with windows at one end we found a couple of men working with long, slender and very sharp knives, cutting the scraped bark into strips of varying width. These were piled into baskets and dragged across the room to where three girls worked small machines looking rather like a simple sort of typewriter. The strips were fed into a sort of slot and came out at the further end as the well-known cork of commerce. The operation was complete.

Each tree is harvested every three years, but of course this harvest is going on all the time. The bark is deeply incised in an oblong, then pulled off, leaving a rich cinnamon-colored under-bark that makes a striking note in the landscape.

We came back to the quay after lunch to be taken in a small power boat, whose owner promised us he would

go just as slowly as we wished, and kept the promise, to see the grotto in the cliff on the north side of the harbor, but beyond its opening. The trip down the harbor, with Bonifacio towering above us, was unique. The grotto proved to be rather large and almost circular, with a huge jagged gap in the roof that reproduced with remarkable fidelity the outline of Corsica. Stalagmites hung thickly, dripping water, and the clearness and color of the water beneath was miraculous. We seemed to lie on the invisible air and to swim in brilliant blue and silver. Coming back our boatman stopped to let us see a smaller grotto, called Venus' Bath, a pool in the white rock overhung with a canopy of stalagmites, that had the pellucid clarity and shining color of the larger grotto, with a greater charm, owing to its smallness and perfection. Little fish swam in it, gleaming like points of light, and colored seaweeds swayed very gently at the bottom. How we did long to swim there ourselves.

The rest of that afternoon we devoted to walking to the Trinité, once a hermitage of which only the chapel survives, with a few ruined huts where the brothers used to live, the whole dominated by a great wooden cross surmounting the sharp rocky peak that towers over the whole countryside, visible for miles.

The first part of the walk was that same straight white highway by which we had come to Bonifacio, and it was hot and glaring. The honeysuckle turned each breath we took to a rapture, however, and after a few kilometres we were able to turn off and take the old winding road that climbed steeply toward the chapel. The *maquis* here contended with patches of garden and

vineyards, with olives gradually taking command as we climbed higher. And the little plateau on which the Hermitage is placed was green with soft grass and beautiful with masses of piled rocks and fine live-oaks.

Those old brothers knew well how to choose a site in which to spend their lives in quiet contemplation and simple toil. The quality of that past existence hung over the place, gave to it the rich touch of imagination and memory. The outlook was superb. Bonifacio, bathed in sunshine and perfectly white, was visible from one end to the other. Sardinia lay a long purple shadow on the paler water, its white villages catching the sun. Northward and eastward the mountains rose, range behind range. The strange stony country, which resembles parts of Arizona, lying close about the olives and cork-trees that make the immediate foreground, actually shimmered in the hot light.

We tried to climb up to the cross, but could only make our way to within some twenty feet below it. It was sheer precipice then, and how the immense thing was got up there is a puzzle.

Down at last, down and down to a long blue inlet we had noticed, where we swam in a little cove like a cup of gold full of melted sapphire. The world was empty, but for us. We might have been on a desert island lost in a tropic sea beyond the farthest reach of adventurous search.

We were up early next morning, as usual. Tumult entered at all our windows! As soon as breakfast was over we were off to climb the high cliff facing on the

Straits, east of the Bonifacion promontory. There is a semaphore and a lighthouse there, but what we went for was the view. The morning was perfectly clear, and we saw everything the world held within a radius of fifty miles. The islands lying in the Straits, three belonging to France and one to Italy, Sardinia of course—we were getting very familiar with Sardinia—with the village of Longo-Sardo directly across from where we stood. Its old towers of defense and the fort of La Magdalena, the Italian lighthouse and semaphore, facing those near which we stood, and back against the sky the long slopes of the mountains rising here and there to fine peaks, all stood clear to us.

To the left was the bulging cliff with Bonifacio like a crown on its top, and the crooked stairway of the King of Arragon showed distinctly. Behind us the cross of the Trinité spread black arms against the sky, the granite peaks looked like fierce teeth, far below the water seethed over the dangerous Reefs of the Monks. Corsica stretched its tumbled mass northward, painted in all the shades of blue and lavender and green.

We had to get back to the city to interview our P. L. M. busman and ask him to stop for us as he passed the Etrangers on his way to Ajaccio. We reached the Place de Fondaco at the appointed time, and waited there a half hour. During that time the children passed us on their way from school to home and *déjeûner*. There were many of them, and they did not look very lusty. Also there were several crippled among them, one most pitifully so. A medieval city is not the best place in the world to bring up a child.

At last the bus rolled up, and to our horror it was packed full. But perhaps some of the passengers were to pass the night at Bonifacio. We interviewed the impressive chauffeur, a young man in a fine livery. No, he told us, no one was getting off to stay.

"But," we expostulated, "we were assured that there would be places for us. How are we to get back to Ajaccio?"

The chauffeur shrugged his shoulders. His expression seemed to say that for his part he did not understand the daring of human beings before the inscrutable future.

"Who could say that there would be places? And can I create places where they do not exist. It is a grand *dommage*, but it cannot be helped."

This was the truth. We couldn't go back on his bus, and there was nothing else out of Bonifacio that day. The first thing back was the same bus we had come on, which returned to Sartene each morning at four. That meant getting up at three thirty, with no one to wake us and no breakfast, for we had been warned that the hotel would not concern itself in that matter.

We remembered that there was a steamer service twice a week or so, and thought that possibly tomorrow morning might be the day for the return trip. The steamer was due that afternoon.

We hastened down to the office on the quay but were told that the steamer would go on that evening to Porto Vecchio, on the east coast, returning next day to stay the night here and then go on to Propriana—it sounded endless and hopeless.

"Is there no other way to get to Ajaccio tomorrow?"

The clerk shook his head. But at that moment a gendarme arrived, and the question was put to him.

"Surely! Tomorrow at six a bus leaves for Ghisonaccia, passing your hotel. There you will have an hour for *déjeuner*, when another bus starts for the mountains, going by way of Ghisoni to Vivario, where it connects with the afternoon train for Ajaccio. You will be in Ajaccio by seven thirty that evening."

Nothing could be better. We should get back only one day later than we had expected and go by way of a new route. And we knew that the road from Ghisonaccia to Vivario was one of the most remarkable for its wild scenery on the island. We had another afternoon too, and we knew just how we would spend it.

There was a certain Gulf of Santa Manza which our small guide book warned us not to miss seeing. We made sure of our rooms for yet another night, and then started across the country directly east, taking the small secondary road that wound back up the valley from the end of the harbor.

It proved to be a tramp full of interest and surprise. Thickly covered with huge old olive trees and divided by the high, curious walls, built as wind protectors, the country has a look unlike anything else we'd seen. These walls are sometimes ten or twelve feet high, built of flat, irregular stones, whitish-gray, the tops often finished in long shallow scallops that are most graceful. Wild rose and honeysuckle poured over them, and everywhere ran little narrow roads, used in the harvest season and seldom enough otherwise. Green roads, with moss and

grass and wild flowers thick in the chinks of the cobbly paving. And every little while a great gate or an arched door gives on the fields and orchards.

There were also small huts built of the stones, with rounded tops. No mortar or binding of any kind is used, the stones are simply shoved forward bit by bit to make the domed roof. A lot of skill must go into this construction. Later, near Saint-Florent, up north on the west coast, we saw other huts like these, but square, and the roofs almost flat, yet built in the same way, without so much as a stick to hold up the weight of stone.

The olives frothed like pots of beer with their masses of bloom as we trod the soft grass under them. Now I found a great clump of silver lilies, next we ran into a spring that fell to the road in a little cascade, bubbling out of the ground under a canopy of the finest maiden-hair fern. An unusually lovely young girl passed by, driving a flock of hurrying sheep, all of them black with small black lambs, the prettiest little things imaginable. The girl wore a dress of the clearest blue and had a bright scarlet handkerchief bound round her head. She gave us a shy greeting.

We kept coming back to the direct route from these excursions among the orchards, and once we ran into our kindly curé, looking very hot in his long black soutane and broad felt hat. He beamed upon us and told us to be certain to look him up if we came back into the city.

Before we reached the gulf we crossed a field full of wild gladioli, mauve and rose, an intoxicating sight. As for the gulf, it was as pretty as a picture card. The guide book told us that we would find boatmen on the

shore ready to row us over to the opposite shore and a certain *étang*, or inlet, described as one of the curiosities of the coast, very long and narrow with high banks clothed in the richest verdure. At the head of this *étang* was a path cut in the rock, and by climbing up on it and going through the woods beyond we could join the high-road to Sartene and return by that to our hotel.

But though there were three men on the shore, they were far too busy for us to ask them to row us across, more particularly as the one boat was a heavy fishing vessel swinging to the tide with sails furled. Two of the men sat under a sailcloth shelter mending their nets, the third was making baskets, the traps used to catch spiny lobsters. They merely nodded briefly as we passed them.

But we didn't care. We went on along that green shore, where the grass grew almost to the water's edge and big yellow poppies made splashes of gold. And we climbed over a barrier of rock to a cove like that we had swum in the day before, and swam in it, and blessed the god of shining waters. And so back slowly enough through the enchanted evening, all silver-green and gray and long blue shadows, with the city visible at last, a shimmer of primrose and lavender.

Our bus next morning arrived only twenty minutes late. The hotel bill proved to be larger than we had expected. After J. M. had paid it and counted the money he had left he remarked:

"It's lucky we aren't held up here another day! I've brought along less money than I thought, and we've got

just enough to get us home again safely. Another delay and we might have had to beat our way back."

We laughed. We didn't know yet that the Jinx was on our trail!

CHAPTER X

THE CORSICAN JINX

BETWEEN the lofty, pallid walls of that singular countryside we ran easily along in the freshness of the morning. There were hills, but nothing really steep, and the road lay almost straight. Blue shadows barred it, no wind stirred the pointed leaves and creamy bloom of the olive trees, that presently gave way to miles of cork trees, equally motionless, but gray and twisted as old men, standing together in disconsolate groups all over the wide plain. In summer this land is poisonous with the malarial mosquito and is practically deserted, but now there were figures moving about the occasional barren houses that grew more and more rare as we sped onward. Presently they ceased, and the walls too disappeared, the trees followed suit, the marshy character of the land grew more pronounced, a melancholy hung over the scene that the brilliant sunshine could not dissipate.

Our fellow travelers seemed to sense this depression in the mood of nature, for we went on in silence over the long level stretches.

Then again hills lifted, trees flourished. Cork oaks far finer than any we had yet seen, proud and splendid trees whose boughs swept a great circle round the tall and heavy trunks. We crossed a stream, passed through more olive orchards, got a brilliant glimpse of sea shining

in the light, and ran into Porto Vecchio nestling amid green slopes at the head of its five-mile long gulf.

The old town is but a remnant of what it was under the Genoese dominion. Its fine harbor has been filling with the sand brought down by the two rivers, the Stabiaco, which we had just crossed, and the Oso, so that it is now useless as a port for any vessel of deep draught. Once its salt works were important, today they amount to little. Its main job is boiling cork bark, which is then shipped away to the continent for finishing. It gathers a big olive crop too. From sometime in June to the beginning of November it is deserted by everyone who can get away, because of the fever.

Its only street is the national route that runs through it, edged by the large, serenely lovely church with its fine tower, and the market place. Here we stopped. It was Sunday, and the market was in full swing with busy persons buying and selling, gay heaps of fruits and vegetables in quaint baskets, patient donkeys waving long ears, mules drawing high two-wheeled carts loaded with produce or filled with folk in holiday dress. There was even a Ford or two.

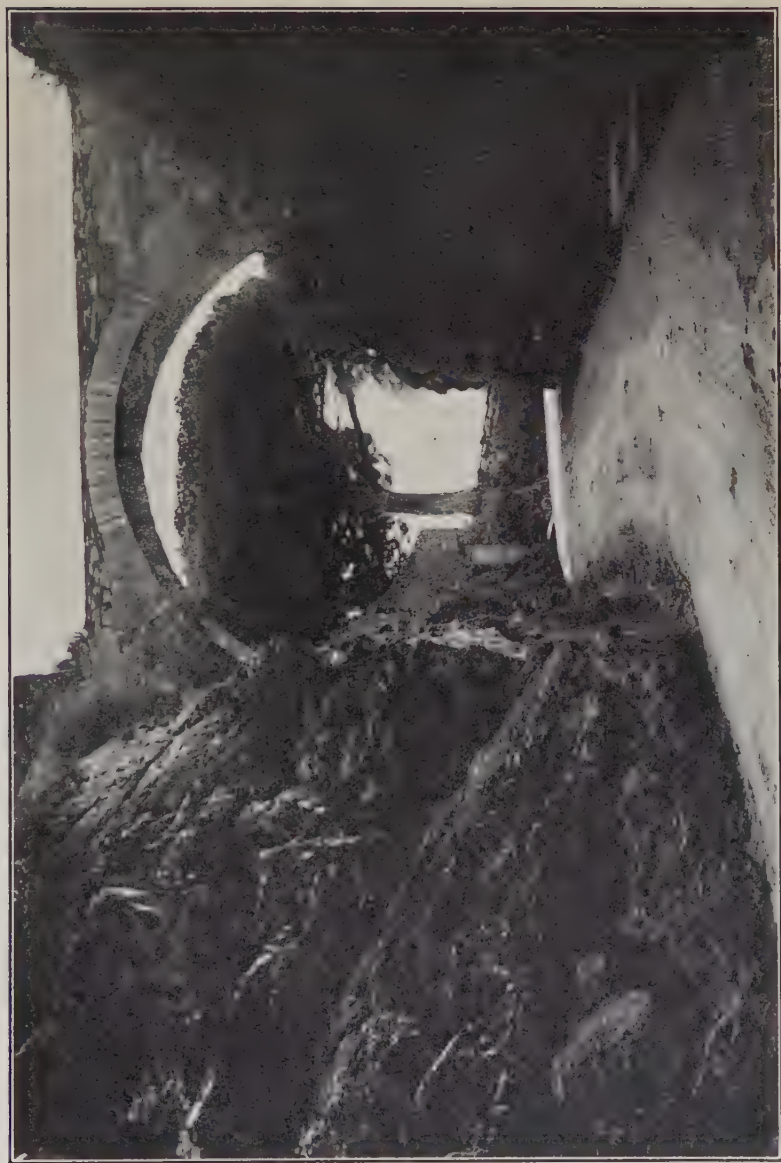
We stopped there twenty minutes and used the time to wander a little in the tiny alleys that led among the tall shabby houses. At one point we caught a glimpse of the salt fields through a huge old portal in the ramparts seaward. The town is surrounded by the remains of its ancient fortifications, great blocks of pinkish porphyry that it must have taken enormous effort to put in place.

Our business-like chauffeur tooted his horn and we

returned, to move out exactly on time. We had scarcely cleared the town, gazing back at the picture it made against the flashing water, when we turned inland and began to climb steeply through a really magnificent forest of cork trees. We crossed the Oso, running swift and clear, reached maquis-covered hills, crossed another swift stream, the Cavo, and headed again for the sea. Now, coming out high above the water, the road ran in a fine cornice cut in the face of the cliffs, following the intricate pattern of the shore-line, with the green heights piling up on our left and the sheer drop to our right. It was enchantingly beautiful, the yellow, white or pinkish beaches, the long points of land jutting out, decorated with trees, pines, olives and live oaks, the sudden turns that sent us now landward, now toward that Tyrrhenian Sea, so famous in history since the dim legendary days, which bounds the eastern coast of Corsica.

Along this radiant way we swung briskly along, meeting no one at all, all the way to the mouth of the Solenzara River. This part of the island is rich in history.

Close along the shore, near the small village of Solenzara, runs a fragment of the old Roman road, mentioned by Antoninus in his *Itinerary*. When Rome held this side of the island this road ran all the way from Aleria in the north to a small port near Bonifacio, called Palae. The Plain of Aleria, most fertile and most unhealthy region in Corsica, begins at Solenzara. It was this great green plain, so fit for raising grain, that tempted the ancient invaders. Here, in the year 534 B.C. the Phoenicians, with whom the actual history of Corsica begins, founded Aleria, then called Alalia. They found the



Turn in the road near Corte

island already inhabited by a fierce mountain race whom they made no effort to subdue, contenting themselves with exploiting the rich lands about them and with trading, swapping their ornaments for the honey, wax and furs brought to them from the hills.

Next came Etrusca, joined by Carthage, who between them cleared away the Phoceans and fortified Alalia, meaning to establish a base there. Then Rome saw and desired. After a long siege and much fighting, the consul L. Cornelius Scipio beat the Carthaginians and their allies. The victory was considered so important that it was inscribed on his funeral urn.

Rome had conquered Sardinia and subdued its people, but she could not conquer or subdue Corsica. She could hold the shores, but that was all. Fighting went on during hundreds of years, and in 173 B.C. there was a terrific battle between the Roman legionaries and the islanders, in which the Corsicans lost more than seven thousand killed and fifteen hundred prisoners; which gives a notion of the kind of fighting it was. After that a sort of truce was maintained. Rome left the people alone, allowed them to stay where they were, asking only some honey and wax as tribute for keeping the peace. She has recorded her estimate of them, remarking on their honesty and sense of justice, and their indomitable spirit. The only traces of her that remain today are the fragments of her road, the remains of her baths, a few coins and ornaments, and some ruins of a circus near Aleria, with a few old walls, vague indications of other buildings. Old Aleria is no more, a small group of

houses and a post office a couple of kilometres from the ancient site being all that exists today.

But Aleria and Solenzara have a more modern and far more fantastic story of invasion to relate than the old tale of Phoceans and Romans. For it was on the coast of Aleria that Theodore, Baron von Neuhoff, a German, landed and made himself for eight months King of Corsica.

This story ought to be preceded by fanfares, an up-rolling curtain and country dances. It is a comic opera with a tragic ending.

On March 12, 1736, a ship flying the English colors dropped anchor in the deserted harbor of Aleria and fired a salvo of cannon shots. Silence alone responded.

Thereupon a messenger was landed with instructions to proceed inland and find Giafferi, Corsican chief, lately returned from exile in Tuscany. With the letter the messenger carried went a present of dried dates, smoked tongues and a dozen bottles of good Rhine wine.

Giafferi was found, accepted the gifts and discussed the letter with several of his associates, among whom the names of Paoli, Costa and de Matra are noted. The end of the discussion was that on the following day these and others repaired to the sea-coast to meet the Personage aboard the ship.

No sooner had they arrived on the beach before a boat put out for shore. From it descended a resplendent figure clothed in a long scarlet robe lined with fur, wearing on its head, over a powdered peruque, a huge cocked hat, and bearing at its side a long Spanish sword. In one hand this figure carried a polished ebony cane.

This splendid being modestly described himself as Baron von Neuhoff, Grandee of Spain, Lord of England, Peer of France, Baron of the Holy Empire and Prince of the Roman Throne. The cargo of his ship consisted, in addition to a few fire arms, of fifteen hundred pairs of Turkish boots, an item of dress new to the Corsicans, plenty of wine, and much good food.

Theodore was followed by a suite of sixteen, a chef, a major-domo, a chaplain, three Moorish slaves in flowing Moorish garments, and two rescued Corsican slaves comprising the more striking part of the outfit.

A talk filled with splendid oratory ensued. Theodore had met several of the Corsican chiefs when they were exiled in Tuscany, and heard them bewail the misery of their country under the oppressor. He now told them that he had come to free them, to establish peace and prosperity. He intimated that all the countries whose titles he bore were eager to fly to his assistance in this program.

A Corsican was always willing to take a chance against Genoa. The chiefs heard and believed. Also, they enjoyed the very excellent dinner prepared for them aboard ship by the efficient chef, and the wines that accompanied it.

A procession was formed and Theodore was conducted to the episcopal palace of Cervione, some twenty-five kilometres northward and another half dozen up the steep mountain slope, where to this day the pretty village sits, overlooking the fertile plain and the sea. Here, after dispensing sonorous titles to his Corsican entourage, all of them doubtless wearing their new Turkish boots, the

baron was crowned King Theodore I. As a throne was lacking an imposing armchair which the departing bishop had left behind him was used, flanked by two smaller chairs in which sat two of the lately ennobled Corsicans. A crown was made from laurel leaves gathered in the garden, and the business was accomplished with all the dignity and gravity possible. This was on the fifteenth, not the first, of April.

Followed the work of establishing the kingdom. A constitution full of excellent provisions was voted. Corsicans alone were to hold power, three of their chief men being associated with King Theodore as an advisory board, without whose consent no laws were to be made nor decrees enforced. A university was to be established. An order of True Nobility created by the King. The Roman Catholic religion must obtain.

Theodore established himself in the Palace of Cervione. He distributed the high offices of the state to those men who had first joined him, and made a number of others extremely jealous. He executed a certain Lucioni for delivering Porto Vecchio to the Genoese, and he continued to promise aid from over-seas.

Finding himself short of money he set up a mint in the monastery of Tavagna. The trouble was to find anything for the mint to work on. It struck one solitary piece of silver, a crown worth about a dollar, and a few handfuls of copper sous. Each of these pieces was stamped with the letters T. R., meaning no less than Theodore Rex. But the disaffected portion of the Corsican population derisively called them Totto Rame,

meaning All Brass, while the Genoese, beginning to get roused, nicknamed them Tutti Rebelli.

Genoa was so astounded at first that she refused to believe in the reality of the invasion and kingdom. But Theodore managed to get a large following and she felt that it was time to take a hand. She began by publishing scurrilous and defamatory notices concerning Theodore, who was described as a low scoundrel and deceiver of the people, a thief and an impostor. These were scattered broadside over the island and distributed to the courts of Europe. Theodore responded with letters addressed to his supporters and the crowned heads whose assistance he asked, saying that he had been spontaneously elected king by an oppressed people who were willing to follow him to death, adding that the noise made by the Genoese was like that of dogs baying the moon.

Genoa's next move was to send some fifteen hundred soldiers, mostly criminals released from the galleys, to put down the presumptuous Theodore. These creatures, called "vittili" by the Corsicans,—a vittilo, since the murder of Sampiero by Captain Vittolo, being their term for the lowest sort of traitor,—committed all sorts of outrages, and defeated the King's troops in one or two small engagements.

In addition all those Corsicans who had not been made princes and lords and generals grew sick of the King and his promises, which showed no signs of being fulfilled. Not a sail appeared on the horizon bringing soldiers, not a silver piece nor a firearm came to their aid.

Theodore left his palace and went to Sartene, as a

safer refuge. He scattered more titles, proclaimed liberty of conscience, promulgated several really excellent laws as to commerce and manufactures, the making of salt and the management of the fisheries. But on November 4, seeing that the island was growing too hot for him, he published an announcement that he was sailing for the mainland to attack the Genoese in their own country, establishing a Regency in his absence. No one paid the least attention to this manifesto.

Utterly deserted, he made his way alone through the wild mountains, down gorges and along the seacoast to the Solenzara, where he embarked on a small vessel flying the French colors and was landed at Livourne in Italy. His reign was over.

For the next twenty years the unfortunate Theodore tried to get back his throne and his island. He wandered all over Europe, hunted by Genoese spies, lying for long months in hiding, appealing to one court or another for help. Once he returned to the coast of Corsica in an English ship, sending ashore a summons for his subjects to rally to him. No one obeyed the call.

In the end he was thrown into prison in London for debt, and languished there six years. Finally he made over to his creditors a paper giving to England the rights in his kingdom of Corsica, which he declared to be his only possession. This was in 1755. The next year he died, half-starved and destitute, in the home of a poor tailor, who had sheltered him through pity. He was buried in the church of St. Anne, London, and Horace Walpole, interested in his curious story, had a stone put up to him there with this inscription:

DESTINY ACCORDED HIM A KINGDOM AND
REFUSED HIM BREAD

Where but in Corsica will you find a true story like that?

Leaving the Solenzara we turned again from the coast, as the swampy land reaches far inland. The air was hot and heavy, but soon we mounted a little and began to get into the forests that cover the slopes here. There were endless streams to cross, most of them mere brooks, but there was one, the Tavo, that was sizable, and before we reached Ghisonaccia, the Fium' Orbo, a splendid mountain torrent that comes plunging from far heights. Musical as its name, it sings through a wild country whose people, among a race little given to submission or servility, are famed for their sturdy independence. As late as the time of Louis XVIII, when France was greatly mismanaging Corsican affairs, they staged a revolution which five thousand regulars of the French Army were unable to squelch. It was only through conciliation that the French could put an end to the trouble.

Our bus, exactly on time, halted before the pleasant little hotel close to the railway station, for Ghisonaccia is the end of the narrow-gauge line running south from Bastia. For a couple of generations the project to push on as far as Bonifacio has hung fire, but work is under way again, as we had seen by occasional glimpses of cuttings and half-built bridges since leaving the Solenzara.

We descended, astonished at being on time, and in-

quired about the bus for Vivario. It was due shortly but would not pull out for an hour. So we went cheerfully to breakfast in an airy room upstairs, ate a good meal at a little table with a snowy cloth, rare sight in Corsica, and then went down to the café for coffee and a *fine*.

"We can treat ourselves to these safely," J. M. announced, having asked the price of the fare. And doubtless the Jinx grinned.

Still the bus hadn't come, but this did not trouble us. We couldn't expect to be on time twice in one day. The train arrived, however, disgorging a crowd, and began puffing up and down before making the return trip.

At length the bus came rattling in. It was a Ford, a light truck with wooden benches placed lengthwise behind, and looked very uncomfortable. When we went to make arrangements the chauffeur told us it was not the regular bus, which had broken down and not left that morning.

"It is only two or three times a week that it does not break down," he added. "More than half the time it is in *panne*."

We asked what time he would get to Vivario, whereupon he told us he wasn't going there. He only went as far as Ghisoni. Perhaps we could get a cabriolet to take us on from there.

But we knew we couldn't catch the train in a cabriolet. He then offered to take us on himself, but at a price. It was not his regular route, and a hard road.

All the money we had wouldn't have paid what he asked. We looked at each other in alarm. Should we have to walk home?

At this instant the engine of the train, backing into the station, tooted its funny little toot. J. M. had an idea and acted on it. He rushed for the station and returned grinning.

"It's all right! We can take this train out, leaving in five minutes, go as far as Casamozza, and change there to the train from Bastia that goes on to Ajaccio, the same we should have boarded at Vivario. Of course we miss that fine drive over the mountains, but at least we'll get home."

Again the Jinx grinned.

But we grabbed our bags and made for the train, blessing our stars that we had not missed it, as there was none other that day. The compartment, a second-class one, was filled. We had our tickets clear to Ajaccio, and fifty francs over. We felt like millionaires.

It was extremely hot, and the small train jogged on slowly, stopping at each tiny village for long spaces of time. We sat squeezed in the middle, watching the marshes steam under the sun. We passed Aleria, lost in the green, and then ran close to the sea once more. The talk in our compartment was friendly and continuous. One man, newly arrived from French Africa, was particularly voluble. His topic was woman, and he had a great deal to say about her, most of it in a cynical vein. Ah, he had lived and learned! If he had not suffered too much, it was because he was a clever fellow and knew when to run, and when to attack. Women—you must manage them.

A soldier and two gendarmes were highly delighted by his talk, and a girl, a pretty thing, protected from the

sun by veils and gloves which she slowly removed, seemed deeply interested. He addressed her at last. He was glad to see that Mademoiselle protected her charming white skin.

"You are not burnt at all—it is ravishing to see a woman who keeps herself white."

"Ah, yes, Monsieur! I know very well the men do not like a burnt skin, and so I take very good care not to burn," she answered. Great laughter greeted this frankness.

Hour after hour passed and we hitched slowly along. The heat began to make us all drowsy. We dozed, waking at the halts, leaning from the windows, exchanging greetings and comments with those outside. And we sweltered. Very different this from that cool mountain ride we had anticipated.

At length and long we got to Casamozza, a tiny junction, the station and one other house in a large grove of eucalyptus making up the entire establishment. One of the men in the compartment with us was going our way, so we three got out. Far to the west the mountains towered, and nearby flowed a slow stream, the river Golo. Our train had not yet pulled in, so far as we could see. We asked our fellow traveler. No, it was not here.

So we followed the rest of the crowd to the buffet and ordered a glass of beer, for we were as thirsty as we were hot. As we drank it we noticed a freight train pulling away from behind the train we had come on. The last car was a passenger car.

We looked at it idly, when we were startled by a wild

shout and next second the figure of our fellow traveler passed at full speed.

"Hurry, hurry," he roared. "There, that train—it is even the one we should be on! See, it goes!"

Well, it went, and without us, and without him. He came slowly back, and we gave him a baleful look. He met it uneasily, and then suddenly started to sprint again:

"There is but one thing to do," he yelled at us over his shoulder. "Take the train on to Bastia—one cannot stop here!"

Already the train was in motion. We flew, and scrambled into a third-class compartment. And now, at last, we realized the Jinx.

Here we were, going further and further from Ajaccio, and with less and less money. The guard came and took five francs away for our tickets as far as Bastia. That fifty francs was getting mighty small.

We knew that the first train out of Bastia left at nine the next morning and reached its destination at seven-thirty that same evening. The few sous we had spent for beer had been supplementary, fortunately. But only forty-five francs remained.

We sat on wooden seats with a number of nice old peasants, amid a large assortment of bags and parcels, pondering on our immediate future. Could we find a hotel that would shelter us and still leave us enough money for meals? It appeared highly unlikely.

On went the train, more rapidly now, along that flat, poisonous, rich east coast. Tall yuccas decorated the landscape, like huge candelabra, and the broom blazed golden, huge bushes and even trees of it, a glorious sight.

We reached the broad *étang* of Biguglia, which has only the tiniest outlet to the sea, choked by the sediment brought down from the hills. The water shone glassy in the sun, with a green island near the middle. This island is famous for its vines, and in winter the *étang* is covered with boats fishing for the gigantic eels that live there, and which are exported in thousands to Naples. In summer it is deserted. But once the now tiny village of Biguglia was the capital of the island, under the Genoese, the *étang* was a splendid harbor, and wealth flowed in from the fields and orchards that spread abroad. In 1372 Arrigo della Rocca, whose ruined château we had seen at Olmeto, took the place by assault. The governor was forced to flee, and after running as far as the mountains behind what is now Bastia he there built himself a stronghold or *bastille*. Bastia took the name of this place in 1380.

A little further along, close to the village of Furiani, are the ruins of another fortress. Here that Giafferi who later received Theodore was besieged by the Genoese, and issuing from it gave them a tremendous licking. Though he was later captured and sent into exile this battle was really the beginning of the end of Genoese domination. It took place in 1729, and in 1769, with the help of France, the island was finally cleared of its age-long foes.

But our journey was over. We plunged into a tunnel, to emerge at the further end in the city of Bastia.

The first thing to do was to see the Chef de Gare and get our tickets fixed, so that we could ride on those we had bought from the junction. He was kindness itself.

Except that we must pay another five francs to get back to the junction, we were as before. Bastia lay before us, and forty francs was now our fortune.

Bag in hand, we went forth to find a hotel that looked both possible and inexpensive. We passed up those near the station and at last stopped at one on a street corner some blocks away. The "Europe" it was called, and though it was large it was unpretentious. We climbed a long flight of stone steps to the second floor, went down a dark passage and opened a door. In a small room we found a fat woman, folding table napkins. Besides herself the room was crowded with plush furniture and paper flowers.

We asked to see a chamber and she took us up another flight and along empty passages and at last unlocked the door of a huge bedroom with two windows and a high wooden bed.

"Yes, this will do very well. What is the price?"

We waited, anxious, breathless.

"Eight francs."

"It is understood—eight francs for the two. And you can give us coffee in the morning?"

"Yes, Madame."

Almost we fell on her neck. Breakfast coffee, we judged, would not amount to more than three francs. The tip would be small. Twenty-four or five francs would remain. Not so bad.

"If only we don't miss that train tomorrow," I muttered, fearing the Jinx.

And we went out to see Bastia.

CHAPTER XI

SMELL BASTIA AND DIE

BASTIA is Corsica's biggest town and metropolis. It counts more than thirty-three thousand inhabitants, as against Ajaccio's twenty-two thousand. It is the head of the military government of the island and its commercial capital. It was also the political capital from the end of the XIV century to 1811, when Napoleon, to please his mother, it is said, transferred the seat of government to Ajaccio. Before 1380 it was the marine of the village of Cardo, a mere cluster of fishing huts. When the Genoese governor ran away from Biguglia and built his bastille on the hills back of the hamlet, it too took the name of Bastia, or bastille. Before long the Genoese moved down there, built the large citadel that still dominates the Old Port, walled the growing city and strengthened the port's defenses.

It is today extraordinarily picturesque.

Like Marseilles, it has its old and its new town, its old and its new port. The old town crowds on the steep hillsides, above the rather long and narrow harbor, protected from the southwest winds by the Dragon Jetty, at the end of which is a lighthouse. Another shorter jetty, built much later, with its own lighthouse, separates old and new ports. The new town lies on the flat ground northeast of the ancient one, with broad streets and the

great open place fronting the new harbor, the Place St-Nicholas, where everyone gathers to lounge and saunter under the fine plane trees and palms with which it is planted. The harbor here too is guarded by a long jetty with another light. At night the effect is delightful, with the riding lights of boats and steamers adding to the illumination.

We naturally turned first to the old town. After following the turns of one or two narrow alleys, like those in Bonifacio, we found ourselves near a church with twin towers. Approaching from the opposite end of the short street came a procession. At the head were acolytes swinging censers, dressed in white and red, after them came perhaps a dozen men in short white capes of linen over blue robes. These supported with some difficulty a large platform on which stood a life-size statue of the Virgin, very fine in shining robes and ornaments. More acolytes and priests chanting litanies followed, and after them a large crowd, walking slowly and reverently. Other people who had joined us fell on their knees as the image reached the church, the men who bore it pausing a moment before they ascended the long flight of white steps leading to the great central portal, flung wide. A perfume of incense drifted by us, the murmuring voices chimed together in the ancient words, the men and women and children on their knees crossed themselves. Then we all followed the image into the church.

We discovered later that this was Bastia's largest and most important church, St-Jean-Baptiste. It was rich with color and marble inside, Romanesque in style, and impressive. We watched the procession move up the

central aisle, to place the statue near the great altar, which blazed with candles. A priest mounted the pulpit, and we, with many others, slipped out again into the street.

Just what the procession signified we did not discover. It may have been blessing the port, or celebrating some religious date in the history of the town. But it fitted wonderfully in that medieval street, with the unusually tall houses crowded so close, with the old carved doors and cobbled paving.

Very near the church a flight of steps that was clearly a street wound downward. We took it, following it almost inside several houses before discovering the little twist the steps had taken, until it landed us on the quay of the old port.

We circled this, with ship chandlery stores and small dark cafés on one hand and a forest of boats with slender masts on the other. Nets were spread out to dry, and in one place a pile of fish lay shining—and smelling. But it wasn't they that mattered.

It was all exceedingly interesting to look at—but oh!

"Smell Bastia and die," declared J. M. in muffled accents. The stench was beyond description, as were some of the reasons for it. Dirtiest of cities, or at least we hoped so, and shameless in its filth.

But we pressed on, making for the end of the jetty, so as to get the full view of the up-piling city and the citadel. A bathing house halfway along was being used by scores of joyous boys, who plunged and dived into the clear water, that seemed unstained by the polluted shores. The view was worth seeing, the intensely blue

little harbor, the pale houses, a green patch where a public garden spread trees, towers, gables, tawny roofs. Boats in the foreground, and the moving, lively quay-life.

The citadel looked interesting so we made for that, getting back to higher ground as quickly as we could, mounting up through a tangle of narrow little ways, passing in and out of tiny stone courts, and along vaulted passages, climbing steps here and a ramp there. We came out at length on a broad avenue that led straight to the huge Palais de Justice, the Lycée and another, smaller school, all framing a pretty, tree planted square. Apparently we had completely lost the citadel.

But a woman directed us, and taking another alley that ran under an arcade, a few more twists and turns brought us out under the donjon of the stronghold, from which we followed a path to the top of the plateau and the citadel proper.

This donjon was built by Vincentello d'Istria in the latter part of the XIV century, and is the oldest part of the construction, a typical round tower of heavy grey stones from which extend high walls forming an enceint, in which the rest of the buildings are included. We entered the place over a drawbridge. There are several small squares, and a number of large oblong pale yellow barracks, closed to visitors, because they are occupied by the military establishment of the city. But the little place on which fronts the old palace of the Genoese governors, built in 1453, and the churches of Sainte-Marie, the very small St-Erasmus, now a museum, and the Sainte-Croix, is the most interesting portion of the citadel.

The Sainte-Croix is richly decorated with gilded and painted stucco in the style of Louis XV, and is really beautiful. But its chief fame resides in the black crucifix kept in a glass case, which is said to be of miraculous origin. Here is the legend:

On a night in the year 1498 a fishing boat with its crew, loaded with anchovies, was returning to port. Still some distance out to sea they noticed a curious light floating on the water. They approached it, and discovered it to be a black crucifix, with two torches alight on its arms. Overcome with awe, they brought the object on board, and as soon as they made port they took it up to the church of St-Jean-Baptiste, where it was placed beside the altar.

But the very next night another fishing crew discovered the cross back again where it was before, with the strange lights again burning. This time it was taken to the church of the Sainte-Croix—and there it has remained, greatly venerated, ever since. Each year the fishers for anchovies donate to it the proceeds of their first catch, asking in return for a successful season.

The church of Sainte-Marie was built in 1604, and is a graceful, delicate thing, with some very fine carved marble inside, particularly the tomb of Jerome Biguglia, a poet and historian of Corsica, whose family originated in the village that was once the capital. The third church, now the museum, was built by missionaries in the XVII century. Later it became a magazine for military supplies. Unluckily the exhibits were not yet fully installed and we could not get in.

A short flagged street led away from all these lovely

old buildings to a stone terrace overlooking the sea and much of the land. To the south, like a piece of bright blue silk rolled out on a green table, stretched the *Etang de Biguglia*. North the heights of the Cap Corse sketched themselves against the sky, that was taking on a sunset hue. Behind us the city reared its houses and church spires, a jumble of pale walls and terracotta roofs. At our feet the precipice dropped to the quay, a steep flight of steps, like a ladder, leading down. The smooth water, the sharp line of the jetty, the white quays, invited us back. But nothing would have made us confront the smells again. We found our way instead to the broad avenue and so along it to the new town and the Place St-Nicholas.

Here a band was playing in a kiosk near a huge white marble statue of Napoleon, who appeared partly wrapped in a Roman robe, partly nude, and resembling a Greek giant. A Florentine sculptor called Bartolini was guilty of the monstrosity. The notion of making a statue of the mighty Corsican that should at all resemble him, and particularly resemble the young man who alone ever set foot there, has not come to any artist in Corsica so far.

There were large and attractive cafés bordering on the place, with flotillas of tables and chairs scattered under the green shade of the trees, most attractive. Quantities of people sat at them, sipping beer or sirups or a vermouth, and listening to the very good military music. We dared not join them. But we did buy a paper, as we hadn't seen one in several days, and found a bench on the water side of the square. There was nothing in the paper except politics, as France was at the time busy

electing a new government, so we watched the strolling people, the pretty girls in their smart dresses and hats, the soldiers and officers and civilians, the queer old men and women, derelicts of life, who seemed somewhat numerous here. In spite of the warm evening, and the summer glow, these unhappy, slow-moving creatures were wrapped up in ancient overcoats if they were men, or wearing jackets and dragging heavy skirts if they were women, as is the way the wide world over. There were plenty of children too, some of them lovely and bright, others, and the greater number, pale, with colds and coughs. Bastia must attend to the cleaning up of its worst outrages against hygienic decency before the children who live there will have the sound health that ought to be theirs.

But it was growing late, and we had to find some place to eat that would be inexpensive. We had seen no restaurants on our stroll through the town, though the cafés were so numerous. We must eat in some hotel, at the table d'hôte. But which one?

We merely glanced at the gorgeous great white Cynos-Palace at the northeast end of the square, where the plutocratic tourists stop. Not for us its liveried splendors. We were looking for something very different.

We found it. Looking into its wide-open windows we saw two or three groups of diners sitting at little tables, people who looked unlikely to be extravagant, but yet as those who insist on good food.

The menu was promising, and the meal turned out to be excellent. Soup, delicious fried fish, followed by string beans, roast mutton, a crisp salad, cheese and fruit, with

wine included, a good red ordinaire. We hoped it would leave us enough, when the bill came, to buy at least a sandwich next day for our luncheon.

To our rapture and amazement the charge was only ten francs for the two of us. Another franc for the tip, and we went forth, beaming. We counted the money that remained. Laying aside eight francs for the room, three francs for breakfast, and two for the hotel tip, twelve whole francs remained to us. Maybe we could get a real meal at Corte, where we understood the train stopped for déjeuner. Anyhow, there would surely be a sandwich.

We returned to the Place St-Nicholas and the sea wall. Out across the water we saw the purple outline of mountains. The island of Elba!

At this pellucid evening hour did Napoleon, under that cocked hat of his, use to stand and stare at the dim outline of his native island? What were his thoughts, if he did? There it lay, so near, yet a whole life and world away. The circle was almost complete, from his anxious, poverty-stricken, ambitious youth on the one island, to the bitter, empty finale on the other.

The light died through rose and salmon and primrose and green to dusky blue and the stars came shining, Venus hanging resplendent in the west above the fantastic outline of the Old Town. The new moon too drew its delicate bow above the city. It was time to go to bed, for we had had rather a stiff day, what with the long traveling, and the Jinx. We sauntered slowly back to the *Europe*, along the "Traverse," popular name of the boulevard with two different names for its two sec-

tions that crosses the city. It passed the corner on which our hotel stood. As we walked, almost along the center of the street, as is the habit in most European towns, a window was flung open behind us. The next instant a pailful of liquid splashed down into the street. Fortunately it missed us. The Jinx was losing strength momentarily.

In Bastia they don't even use the old Middle Ages warning, *garde-à-vous*. They just open and chuck. We hurried to the shelter of the hotel.

By seven we were up and doing. Breakfast proved to be a bowl of café-au-lait and good crusty bread but no butter. No matter. Who were we to demand luxuries? The morning was fairly cool and we sauntered out, luck taking us to the market, in full progress in a fine old square between the two sections of the city. Under little booths or heaped in quaint baskets in the open were fruits, vegetables and flowers, while chickens and ducks clucked or squawked in wicker cages, and women with white or black handkerchiefs over their heads drove donkeys whose panniers were loaded with country produce. The color was kaleidoscopic, the motion and the chatter continuous. Round about, the century-old houses stood impassive, the patina of time enriching their walls. The square was streaked with yellow sunlight and blue shadow. Strawberries, huge and luscious, fragrant flowers, spilled their perfume. For once Bastia smelled sweet.

Taking no chances with the Jinx, we got back to the hotel long before train time, and asked for the bill. I

was haunted by a fear that the eight francs might be doubled. It proved unfounded. But to our horror the *taxe de séjour* was on the bill. We'd forgotten it completely! Only two and a half francs, but it knocked our hope of luncheon.

However, needs must, and we paid, and hastened away to the station. We found seats in the third class, and were the first there. The train would not pull out without us!

Suddenly J. M. gave a shout.

"Look here, they never charged for breakfast," he cried.

They hadn't. In the excitement over the *taxe* we had not realized it. Was it an oversight? We shall never know. But we were fifty centimes to the good instead of two francs fifty to the bad! We grinned at each other.

The narrow-gauge, after leaving Casamozza, twists and turns among the mountains like the old Short-Line between Colorado Springs and Cripple Creek. The views were stupendous. At Cassamozza we had been able to resume the comforts of the second class, and had an empty compartment, which was pleasant. We were following up the course of the Golo, which here was a series of rapids and falls alternating with bright stretches of comparatively smooth water. Big engineering projects are being put through that will divert some of the water for irrigation, while down in the plains draining is going forward. Some day this side of the island will be healthy, as well as more productive than any other part of Corsica.

We climbed higher to the chestnut forests, and to barren slopes of granite or marble, rough and splendid.

maquis covered some of the hills. Presently we came opposite a village hanging on the mountain slope high above our level, gray and white houses round a church tower. This is Canavaggia, where the Paolists, in the year 1769, made their last stand against the French for the independence of Corsica. There were later struggles, to be sure, in which Napoleon played a small part under the French, as I have indicated, but this was the last important battle, in whose effort any large part of the population sympathized.

Here we passed, without crossing, a beautiful bridge on five lofty arches, built by the Genoese, who, however rotten as governors, certainly knew and created beauty. This bridge was the exact point where the coup de grâce was given the Corsican forces.

The French, under the Comte de Vaux, had an imposing army, and Paoli had called to his aid every patriot on the island. For three days the opposing armies had watched each other warily, afraid perhaps to put things to the touch. Then the French opened a big artillery attack. The Paolists merely hid in the rough wilderness till it was over.

The Golo lay between French and Corsicans. Paoli threw a large force of his men to the enemy's side, and at first succeeded in driving them before him. But there was a rally, and the French took their turn at driving.

The bridge itself was held by a corps of German deserters from their own country, who had joined the Corsican forces. They had orders to hold the bridge, which had been fortified, against any attacking force. When the defeated Corsicans reached this bridge the

Germans opened fire on them. Caught between this murderous attack and their pursuers, the unhappy patriots were decimated. The cry of treachery arose and spread. The French advanced on a foe already panic-struck, and the route was complete. Paoli fled to England, and the last real attempt to make Corsica an independent state perished.

This part of Corsica, with its rugged peaks and wild valleys, is known as the Nebbio. It is of exactly the same character so far as appearances go, as the Rocky Mountains. We felt at home here.

Our first stop was at the junction where the line branched, one section leading to Calvi and the coast, westward, the other proceeding on to Ajaccio. The guard called that there was a half-hour stop here, and looking out we saw that a number were hastening to a small buffet. It was only half past eleven, but J. M. got out too, to see what the prospects were.

He hurried back:

"Come along," he called. "We'd better eat here instead of waiting till we reach Corte. There are tables out in a little garden, and the notice says *déjeuner complet* for five francs. Corte will probably be a lot more expensive."

I was ready enough, and we soon found a little table and were being served in short order with a good meal, wine included. In addition, there was a troupe of gipsies with concertinas and guitars playing in the middle of the little square of green under the trees. They played lively airs, full of swift rhythm, and there were shepherds and soldiers dancing, two by two. No women, of course. You never see any of the country women dance in Cor-

sica. It was all very jolly and infinitely more harmonious than the jazz entertainment in a New York restaurant.

We got aboard again, fed and secure. All we had to do now was to sit where we were and let the train take us home. After paying for the luncheon we had one franc fifty centimes left—about eight cents at the current rate of exchange. We were rich.

The train wound on through the very heart of the island, among a medley of mountains, valleys and cañons. We continued for some time to stick to the Golo, crossing it now and again, plunging in and out of tunnels, taking hairpin turns. The high sawtooth range of the Scala-di-Santa-Regina sprang up against the sky, snow peaks advanced and retreated, we ran through magnificent forests and watched long thin cataracts plunge crookedly down the face of dizzy slopes. At the small village of Omessa we halted a few minutes, wishing we could get out for an hour. The ruins of an old château dominate it, but more interesting is the church, with several unusual paintings, one of the Virgin and Child that is enclosed in a frame made of golden hair and studded with precious stones.

Next we arrived at Corte.

Corte lies in the middle of a wide circular valley surrounded by magnificent mountains, and is built on an abrupt hill that sticks up just where the rivers Restonica and Tavignoa have their confluence. Corte is not only geographically but psychologically the heart of Corsica. It is the most Corsican of her cities, and has always been the center of heroic resistance against the enemy and the oppressor. In the old days it was the refuge

of the wild mountaineers whom neither Carthage nor Rome could subdue. Genoa was never able to hold it. From here, in 1419, Vincentello d'Istria issued with a small force of men and cut to pieces a far larger army of the Genoese. Here Sampiero made his headquarters, and after him Paoli. Once or twice the Genoese captured it, to be driven out again. Its daughters swore, while the enemy held the city, not to marry nor to bear children, for slaves they would not bring into the world. Its men preferred death to submission, and from one end of time to another Corte has been the symbol of Corsican independence, and stood for the dauntless spirit of her people.

It is an astonishing place, piled abruptly upward on a pointed rock that is crowned by its citadelle, a creamy-toned oblong building dominating a huddle of smaller ones within the high gray walls of the fortress. This once comprised the entire city. Now it reaches down the hill to the flat land about the station, but it has not lost one whit of its picturesqueness in the changes made by more modern days. Unluckily it disputes the palm with Bastia for dirt and smells. "Don't go there for even one night," we were warned.

The country round it is renowned for its excellent grapes from which a superior wine is made, for its cattle, goats and sheep, whose pasturage approaches that of the Alps in goodness, for its chestnut forests and its olives. It makes oil and cheese, and its quarries produce a white, fine-grained marble that is sold in the statuaries of the world under the name of Carrara. What Carrara thinks of this we were not told.

We supposed that there would be some stop here, as the guide book informed us that the buffet was especially recommended, and we thought we would give the half or whole hour to a sight of the town. But the guard was yelling "*en voiture*" a few minutes after we stopped. What ho!

We soon discovered that the luncheon stop had been cut out here. You ate at Porto-Leccia, or you didn't eat.

We continued toward Ajaccio, and we heaved a great sigh of relief. The Jinx was dead, no doubt of that. Beneficent powers had us in hand again. We had eaten, and eaten well, not knowing at all that otherwise we should have had to whistle for our food and drink the wind as answer. We were now on the last lap of our round-about journey home.

We drew slowly up, past Vizzavona, where we were due to arrive for a visit in a few days, crossed the last pass, and slid down to Ajaccio, that lay, a halfmoon of pale gold, in the last rays of the sun that set early behind the high barrage of western hills. It looked good to us. We gave up our tickets at the station gate, with the cabalistic signs traced upon them by the chef-de-gare at Bastia, and stood again in the familiar streets of what by now almost seemed our native town. We stopped, on the way to the Etrangers, to buy the evening papers, and with a few sous left we entered its hospitable doors. All was well.

"We might go into training as the world's cheapest travelers," I suggested. "We've certainly made a fine start."

CHAPTER XII

WE TURN TO THE MOUNTAINS

WITHIN the week we finished up some work that had to be done and said goodbye to Ajaccio, which was fast losing its charm. The dust lay thick and flew thicker, the air was listless and muggy, the hills were brown, and the cuckoos whose voices used to ring from the woods had fled, or fallen silent. After sunset to be sure the sea-breeze freshened the air with a remembrance of spring vigor, the nights were cool and sweet; but the nightingale haunted them no longer. It was too hot and too dusty to walk to our bathing beach, or anywhere else. So goodbye!

We reached Vizzavona, passing through the pretty village of Bocognano, after a three hour trip in the train, though the distance is but fifty-one kilometres. But most of it is up. Before luncheon we were installed in a hotel near the station, which didn't matter, as the railway is less frequented than any other road in Corsica. Four trains a day were all that passed. The hotel is a square stone building with a steep flight of steps leading to the front door, and stands in the middle of a rather bare garden. Apple-trees surrounding a lawn provided what there was of culture. Back of it the pines stood close together, all the way up the steep slope of a long mountain. In front was a little mule path, then the railway,

then an almost precipitous drop to the river Vecchia. The other side of the cañon, for it was a cañon, rose up and up, to the great bulk of Monte d'Oro, crowned and streaked with snow, and with crooked white torrents running and leaping from that snow to fall in musical confusion into the wild river, which went singing a great song over shining, many-colored boulders.

Our windows looked right at this mountain and let in the river's voice. There were trees everywhere, magnificent pines and equally splendid beeches, it was a moving world of green boughs and whispering winds. How heavenly all that shifting shadow was after the glare of the sea and the white roads. Pine needles underfoot, long shafts of gold lying cool on the brown carpet and patching the tawny trunks. Light air, shimmering, fragrant, bracing.

We had an hour before luncheon and got out under these pines at once. They towered, many rising more than two hundred feet with trunks four feet in diameter, and they sprang clean and healthy from the soil with all the vitality of the evergreen. As the wind tossed them to music they swayed to their roots with an almost imperceptible motion. No other tree gives itself with such rapture to the flow of the wind, reveals such grace of yielding.

There are, happily, pine forests in most parts of our world, but there was one addition to this forest that I had never seen before. Everywhere rose tall spires of pink foxgloves, ranging from a foot in height to some that measured five and a half feet, with flower spikes two feet and over. The effect of these flowers in that

harmony of tawny gold and shimmering green is indescribable.

We were the only guests at the hotel and had had our choice of bedrooms, but as usual we had to eat in the forlorn place that is so common for a dining room all over Corsica. A dark, unattractive hall, with large tables, a vase or two of faded flowers, the windows tightly closed. We remedied this, since we were alone, and let in the warmer outside air. And we ate well. Fresh trout was one of the courses, fried to perfection. I complimented the maid on them and she smiled graciously.

She was not like the other maids we had seen in our joggings over the island. A careful art had gone to paint those cheeks and lips, and darken the already dark eyes. Young, and in mourning, but not, one would say, averse from the hope of worldly contacts. There were long black earrings at each side of her rather full cheeks; she was further adorned with a black necklace, even a black ring. Widow, she told me, and sighed. Adding: "Unless I marry again I must continue to wear black." I told her she would hardly be permitted to remain unmarried, upon which she flashed me a smile, and for dinner we had a bouquet of fresh roses on the table.

We had stayed too long in Ajaccio, and now, with our visit to Corsica drawing to an end, we regretted that we had left so short a time for this mountain portion of the wonderful island. The clear and dustless air, the murmur of the trees and the rushing of falling water, the blessed shade, the silence and emptiness of the hotel, all combined to rest and relax us. We had only to take

a few steps and we were isolated in the forest. The winding trails led to deep springs, or along brooks that glinted as though they flowed over rare jewels. There were green, smooth places ringed with foxgloves, and cool pools that stirred with a motion like the pulsing of a heart.

Vizzavona is a summer resort of Corsica, and consists merely of a post-office and amusing little general store, and a few hotels. We decided that one up on the *col* was the most enticing. It was really attractive, with spreading wings, balconies, a terrace on which tables were placed, and it was surrounded by enormous old beeches, and looked as though it would be both quiet and well-managed. It is a few kilometres from the station, but, had we been going to remain, we should have moved to it. For at our place we were not, that is to say during the night and early morning, entirely quiet.

There were two handsome Belgian police dogs belonging to the patron of the place who spent the night in alertly listening for any slight, unexplainable sound, and when they heard it, and this they did frequently, rushing out in a perfect tempest of excitement and a great salvo of barks. The last time this chorus tore me from my slumber on our first night it was accompanied by the ringing of many bells, and a shouting as of a populace gone mad. I went to the window, for morning had come, and looked out.

Down the mulepath came a train of mules, presenting a most singular appearance. They looked rather like small log cabins with neatly tripping legs and long ears. Each mule was loaded with three great logs, in fact, and

the train was being driven along by two or three young men who cracked whips and shouted continuously. Why is it that mule driving inspires such a desire to yell in the breasts of the muledrivers? It is always so. Yet a mule is the cleverest, most silent of animals. Those mules moved easily and sedately under their burdens, sidled up to the unloading place, stood still while the unwieldy burden was released and rolled to the ground, then stepped away, snatching at the grass and slowly reascending the path. They knew exactly what to do and did it without fret or racket. Meanwhile the dogs raged and the men yelled.

After a couple of days given to the forest, to climbing the slopes of Monte d'Oro, finding a deserted cabin near the river, following a score of adorable trails, it was time to make a special trip afoot that particularly appealed to us.

There is a mountain trail leading in great zig-zags over the Palmeto Pass, in the mountain that rose behind the hotel, and then down the other side to Ghisoni. From there we could go on to the famous gorge of the Inzecca, out of which we had been cheated by the Jinx on our trip back from Bonifacio. The only trouble was that this trail is badly marked and for part of its course extremely blind. But luckily we had a map drawn for us by one of the two Englishwomen we had been so fortunate as to meet at Ajaccio, who had spent many years in Corsica. With this map and the directions she had given us, we knew we could find our way. Accordingly, on a diamond-bright morning, we set off.

It was a good climb. First through the forest, and

then out on wide grassy slopes that met the sky. We missed our way once, in spite of the map, found we were wrong when we came to a tumbling torrent across the path, turned back cussing ourselves and each other, and tried a number of blind trails that ended quickly before we found the right one. It started in the bed of a dry stream and gave not a hint of a footstep for many yards, so it was no wonder we'd missed it. But coming back the opposite way we caught a turn of it above, among the trees, and rejoiced. The satisfaction of getting back to the right trail after being astray is one of the delights of tramping. Another is to sit, after a stiff, trying climb, beside a spring, and that came to us up there on the grass. A bubbling, ice-cold spring it was, with tiny flowers around it amid the soft, short grass, and a great spreading view over the ascent we had made, the Peak of Oro across the cañon, remote and noble, the green forest reaching all the way to the Col of Vizzavona and down almost to Corte, which was hidden from us by some shoulder of hill.

I had had the bad luck to twist my foot between two stones coming up, and now took off my sneaker and stocking to have a look at it. It was impressively puffed and streaked handsomely with purple. I soaked it in the icy water for several minutes, and then we pushed on to the top of the pass. Now we got the view on both sides, and could see our descending trail before us, sidling off like a ladder laid slantwise to disappear finally round the long steep slope to our right. The panorama of peaks and gorges and far valleys, with the shaggy forest and the aspiring needles and points of rock, the snow ranges,

was all a mountain view should be. The wind blew in our faces, keen and aromatic. Not a village or a hut or a sign of human creature in all the vast expanse.

We had to get around a huge snow drift that filled a small cut and was too deep and too rotten to cross. The draw was choked with aspens and it was a job getting through them and then getting back down a small precipice to the trail, but we managed it, purple foot and all. I kept stopping at the many streams and sticking the poor thing into the refreshing iciness, and probably that saved it from growing really serious, but I had to favor it, and went in a kind of hippity-hop way more amusing than graceful. J. M. is possessed of a sense of humor stronger than his feelings of sympathy, and it was to the former quality that I appeared to appeal most strongly. This annoyed me, not unnaturally.

Presently at a turn in the trail we confronted a drove of hogs, who instantly took a violent dislike to us and with shrieks plunged downward among the rocks and the roots of the trees that were once more beginning to surround us. A few steps farther along we saw their herder, a young girl with bare feet and a flat straw hat like a tray from under which fell two pigtails, appropriately enough. She was sitting on a gray rock, knitting, and she smiled at us delightfully.

So we told her where we'd come from and where we were going, and she said that it was a fine day for such a promenade and that she hoped we should have the best of fortune on our way. Were we going right? Certainly. At the next turn we would see, on the farther

crest of the hill, a *bergerie*. We must make for that, and beyond it take a trail down through the forest.

The next turn proved to be surprising in that it opened up an entire new valley, filled with another mighty forest. The trail hugged the slope almost at a level, following round the head of this valley to the crest beyond, where we could just make out a stone hut or two. While we were moving easily along toward the crest we were startled by hearing a long musical call that came from far away; it was presently followed by a crashing roar as of an avalanche. Echoes caught and played with both cry and crash, ending at last in a long sigh of sound.

We stood, wondering, listening, then went on, when again came the call, again the crash and sigh and wandering echoes. Then we understood. Down far below on the slope woodcutters were at work, and it was the fall of a tree that we heard. A sound poignant and thrilling that stirs the heart.

We reached the ridge and made our way along its top, with a glorious view of the second of Corsica's master peaks, Mont Renoso. Here too the everlasting snow lay, chill and shining. About us were some splendid pines and chestnuts, and the ridge, on its further side, dropped abruptly to another valley, equally tree-covered and utterly wild.

At the *bergerie* or shepherds' hamlet we found one lone woman, who pointed out to us, among the multiplicity of sheep trails, the one that we must take. It was a good one, quickly plunging into the forest, with easy grades and well trodden. And as we went down on it, we met the broken parts of a procession coming up.

Now a flock of goats or pigs with their drivers, now donkeys loaded with household goods, sometimes with a small child atop of the pots and pans and blankets and other gear, men driving them, women following with bundles on their heads, children slipping past us, wide-eyed and shy. It was a curious, interesting exodus, quite biblical in appearance, renewing the impression, constantly recurring in Corsica, of a life close-linked with an undying past, unchanged from centuries gone. These people were moving up from the hot, unhealthy lowlands to spend the summer with their flocks in the mountains, where the latter could have grass and water, and they cool days and healthy life.

After a long, steady descent, on the way passing the camp of loggers, who were then eating their midday meal, with great prostrate trees about them, some partly sawn into boards, or split with an axe, all hand work, we reached the highway some five kilometres above Ghisoni. It followed along a mountain stream, and was mostly under the shade of gigantic chestnuts, bigger even than those colossi of the tree world, Burnham Beeches in England. Not so much for height—they were not higher than the well-grown of their species in any favored spot—but for their tremendous girth and the spread of their boughs. We were hungry and tired too, and my foot by now resembled an eggplant in shape and color, but we couldn't resist climbing off the road to two or three of the hugest of these giants, to estimate their size. Many must exceed fifteen feet in diameter.

Ghisoni lies in a horseshoe on a slope at the bottom of which races the small but deep tributary of the Fium'

in the gutter, kneeling in the road, and it is all most comfortable and homelike.

The hotel is run by an old maid with a cast in her eye and a contained, grim sadness of expression. But her voice was one of the softest and gentlest I ever listened to. She had a single assistant, a young maiden, pretty as a picture and radiant with the joy of life. This girl was always singing, strange, wild little songs that seemed to have neither beginning nor end, or if she wasn't singing she was laughing. We saw her first coming from the fountain with a great wooden tub of water on her head, walking like grace itself, dashing aside, with a lovely gesture of one half-bared arm and hand, the drops of water escaping from a small leak that threatened to wet her shoulder, and caught at once an impression of youth and happiness not easily forgotten. Marie she was called, and Marie of Ghisoni stands out among the women of Corsica as a rainbow shines against a dark sky.

She waved us into the hotel, telling us we were fortunate, if we had not yet eaten, as a basket of fresh trout had just been brought in and we could have as many as we wanted.

Trout? We felt calm about trout. There had been trout and again trout at Vizzavona.

But to such appetites as we brought anything was new and desirable. And after all, there is no better fish in the world than a fresh trout.

There was a pleasant spirit in that hotel, simple and barren of comforts as it was. The rooms were clean and fairly orderly, there was electric light even in the

bedrooms, for Ghisoni is that wonder among all Corsican villages, a place lighted by electricity. Down in the stream near an old half-ruined bridge was the small plant that supplied the current, and all the houses had it. So far as I know it is the only village so supplied, in a land with water power enough to run all the machines of New York State, all going to waste. The dining room was upstairs, our bedroom opened from it in fact, and it was light and airy. Mademoiselle, our hostess, was a good cook, even the morning coffee mixed with sheep's milk was excellent. And we had here, and nowhere else, the snow-white butter made from the same source, that is delicate and mild, with a faint queer flavor.

Our plan was to spend next morning walking down the gorge of the Inzecca to the point where it broadens out into a valley and loses its cañon quality. Then to be driven to Vivario in time to catch the train to Vizzavona, a ride of twenty or twenty-five minutes. So we asked our shining Marie to find us a driver and a conveyance. Presently she returned with a thin, dark young fellow with shock hair looking like the comb of a rooster. We explained what we wanted.

"We shall have to start at nine in the morning," he told us.

We exclaimed. It was not much over twenty kilometres. We could walk it in less than four hours. We needed the morning for our trip down the Inzecca, and surely if we left at one o'clock it would be early enough.

A passion fell upon that youth. He sprang from his chair, thumping his chest, tossing that cresting hair:

"And I—I? What of me? I have to come back again.

A hard climb of ten kilometres to climb on this side, and coming back again another ten even more difficult. Six hours I need for the whole trip, and two hours to rest my mule and myself! I have to think too of my dinner." His eyes flashed, he almost broke into a chant in the emotion of the moment. At the end of his declamation he gave way to scornful laughter. I expected him to plunge a stiletto into something or someone, turn on his heel, snap his fingers and leave us, but instead he sank back into his chair and looked away out of the open door.

Marie suggested that it might be better to remain over an extra day, and then both trips could be made. But we had a sudden inspiration.

Why could not the youth and his mule take us in the morning to the Inzecca? Then we could spend the afternoon going back across the Sorba pass and so by a mule-track swing off from the road to Vivario and land at Vizzavona in time for dinner. That would give my foot a longer rest, and the walk over the mountains was sure to be the more interesting.

All was well. We promised to be ready at seven, hands were shaken, smiles beamed, and Marie burst again into song.

Several hours of the day remained. I had soaked the confounded foot in boiling, or so it seemed, water, and most of the pain had gone out of it. We couldn't stay in.

Dominating the village and the country about it are two precipitous peaks with many needles of colossal proportions, pale gray and richly carved by the elements and the centuries, called Keirie Eleison and Christi Eleison. We moved slowly along the road to Sartene,

with these mighty masterpieces before us, and all around the terraced slopes that surround Ghisoni, planted with vines, fruit trees and garden truck. The wine made here is of good quality, and the many little holdings were well taken care of. As we went on we opened up a view into a whole new field of mountain and valley land, and all the while the two Eleisons stood superb, changing as the shadows moved upon them, presenting now one needle, now another in bold relief.

After supper we sat with the rest of the village on the wall and looked and talked. The moon was half full, giving as much light as it yields at its roundest further north, and the whole swimming landscape was flooded with a miraculous tenderness of luminous shadow and silver brightness. We filled our eyes with the glory of the world, and ate cherries from a basketful the hostess had given us, and felt absolutely content.

Next morning the temperamental youth was prompt, but so were we. He had a fine young mule attached to a high, yellow, two-wheeled cart with one seat, into which we all three squeezed. And with a great clatter we tore through the village, scattering pigs and fowls, while the children stared impressed.

The mule trotted with a short and mincing step down the switchbacks of the road, while the brake squeaked and nature displayed the finest pieces in her pack. We descended the left bank of the Ghisoni stream, passing a mill turning a slow wheel to the beat of the water, where flour is made—not wheat, but chestnut flour. Then down the left bank of the Fium'Orbo. As we went the cañon narrowed till it was merely two immense walls of



Wayside inn among the mountains

broken and jagged rock, towering far above us and plunging desperately below, where the fierce stream roared and swung its foaming torrent over and between masses of fallen boulders. The water where it was not white was an intense green, and clear as emeralds are. Wherever root could be thrust pines stood, now in lovely groups, now singly. Some were up against the sky, some overhung the river, others were tucked into niches or stood spreading and enormous on some bold promontory.

We passed a mine on the opposite bank which, our driver told us, is a zinc mine, and just being developed. Work was waiting the arrival of some special machinery due to arrive from the continent. Antimony and silver also exist. It all looked very energetic and modern and utterly un-Corsican.

Though on a somewhat smaller scale, the Inzecca is very like the Royal Gorge of Colorado. At its deepest and wildest part we left the driver and his equipage and walked on to get the full effect of the place. Now we could hear the music of the torrent, echoing up from that wild bed of rocks. It was narrow and tortuous to the extreme, quite inaccessible.

A little way below the cañon broadened, turned into a spreading valley, the heights grew rounded, covered themselves with *maquis*. Far to the east the horizon raised a hazy blue wall of sea to the skyline. It was tremendous.

We drove back at a walk, except once.

Then the mule, temperamental in her turn, shied violently at a bicycle leaning against the wall that protected passersby from falling into the cañon, and with a snort

of terror broke into a frantic gallop. The suddenness of it almost upset us. Why that particular wheel was terrible to her, we did not know. We had already passed several, spinning down or being walked up. But the mule had no doubts on the matter, and it was several minutes before the boy could get her under control. The fact that she was going straight uphill helped considerably. Seeing that she was winded, he started to beat her.

I stopped him. Things there are I can't stand. He yielded to the clutch of my hand on his arm and my "*Je vous en prie, Monsieur,*" but he insisted:

"She should be punished, fool of a pig that she is. What is a bicycle that she should try to kill us? Suppose we had been going down, hein?"

Marie met us, all smiles, as we got down in front of the hotel. Had we enjoyed ourselves? Was not the Inzecca the most wonderful sight on earth? And again how fortunate we were, for even that moment a fresh consignment of trout had arrived and were now frying for our luncheon.

Well, we didn't break into three rousing cheers, but we ate about ten trout each. They were small and deliciously cooked. Yet "a trout a day drives the appetite away," I decided. What would ten a day accomplish. Finis!

We said goodbye to the soft-voiced patronne with regret, and to Marie with real affection. We had come to be friends with both during our brief stay. The evening before the patronne had brought chairs out to us by the wall, and stayed to chat. We told her where

we had been on her island, and broke into praises. She nodded.

"I was once for a day in Bastia, and once for two days in Ajaccio," she said. "But not elsewhere have I been. Ah, Madame, how could it be arranged? My place is here, there is no one else to see to the house. I shall never get away." And she sighed.

I thought of that bright, ambitious young creature in the hotel in the little Greek village of Cargese we had spent a nooning with when first we came, and wondered if her fate too would lead to this—"never to get away."

Slowly we climbed up the way we had come the day before, stopping to look back again and again at the two Eleisons and the down-plunging valley. It was pleasant under the shading chestnuts, and glad we were of our change of plan. For the road to the Inzecca, cut out of the sheer cliffside and exposed relentlessly to the sun, was hot and dusty, and would have made a heavy, monotonous walk. Now, just beyond where our trail of the day before came in, we crossed a bridge and went up the opposite slope to round a shoulder of the mountain and find ourselves confronting new horizons.

The forest was back again, but there were bare slopes that opened on splendid mountain prospects. Crystal streamlets crossed our path, gorges broke into the ascending slope on the left and swept downward on the right. The air was keen with the mountain fragrance and the road empty, calm and shadow-streaked. Once we passed a solitary shepherd, who was calling to his scattered flock

in musical, haunting phrases, old almost as the rocks from which they echoed.

The top of the Sorba pass, and the downward plunging road on the further side are as fine a sight as any in Corsica. The three great peaks, Oro, Renoso and Roton-do, with their vast mass of depending peaks and ranges, their snowy crests and the broad, green, fertile valleys and immense forest-covered slopes, fill the entire extent of vision. Here and there were villages hanging in what looked like inaccessible spots, and the white loopings of the many roads that thread that mountain country gave a touch of fantastic decoration to the scene. Around us were splendid old pines, spaced and grouped as if in a park.

The road was smooth as silk underfoot and we made the endless hairpin turns without having to take our eyes off the panorama spread for us. We were in sight of Vivario before we found the mulepath that took off a big corner and would bring us back to Vizzavona in only a little more time than we should have spent making it on the train. It was good to tread turf, and in a high little cañon in the broad brown pool of a mountain brook we took a most refreshing plunge. Cold but tingling with oxygen from foaming leaps and rushes, the water might have come straight from caverns measureless to man, past Kubla Khan's own pleasure dome. The rhythm of that poem, at least, rang in my ears as we swung on down the long green slope on the last lap of our tramp.

Yes, we had trout for supper. Our rouged maid told us, with pleasure, that seeing how much we enjoyed them,

she had been able to get more for us. We thanked her for the thoughtful kindness, and we ate them. We'd have eaten anything, for that matter. Try walking over the Sorba and you'll understand.

The barking dogs waked us promptly next morning a couple of hours before we needed to get up, which gave us a chance to wander a little under the pines before taking the train. It was hard to leave that land of trees and clear brooks and sudden springs, the white peaks of the severe mountains, the freakish torrents that slipped so crookedly down them, the fragrant air with its snap and lightness. But we had heard much of the Cap Corse, and we wanted to see Calvi and other nearby towns. And there was a hint of consolation in the thought that there'd be no more trout, down there by the sea.

CHAPTER XIII

CALVI, ILE ROUSSE, SAINT-FLORENT

WE reached Calvi toward evening, after another whole day in the train. It is only a little over sixty miles, but the up-and-downs are constant and considerable. This time we lunched at Corte, but there was no garden, and no gipsies. From Ponte-Leccia on we were treading new ground.

Almost at once the character of the scenery changed. The mountains were more like desert hills, the forest had vanished. We plunged in and out of tunnels, crossed and recrossed a turbulent stream, the Navaccia, halted at occasional villages. One, Palasca, was particularly striking. It stood, neat and tidy, on a green shelf, with a crest of high rock above it, white walled, red roofed, looking at the distance from which we saw it, like a sample in the shop of nature, ready to be wrapped up and taken away.

Late in the afternoon we came again in sight of the sea, and kept getting glimpses of it far below us as we turned and twisted downward through wild and rough country that suddenly yielded to the finest olive orchards we had so far found in Corsica, and to a general cultivation that bespoke a rich soil and hard work. This agricultural land lies around Ile Rousse, through which we passed and ran close beside the sea on to the end of the line and Calvi, where we were to stay the night. The

sun was blazing in the west, with not more than an hour to its sinking, as we got out at the small station and crossed to the other side of the street, where the Grande Hotel gave what proved to be a false impression of comfort. We left our suitcase there, and set out to see the odd little city, which has at least two historic claims, besides its sheer medieval beauty, to make it worth a visit.

Here, in the days of 1794, when England and France were struggling over the possession of Corsica, Nelson's fleet anchored in the harbor and fired more than four thousand shells into the city, reducing a large part of it to a heap of ruins. Nelson firmly established the English power in this part of the island, but reverses elsewhere made it advisable for the British to drop the hot potato of Corsica, and Nelson was recalled. He took his time, shipped all his men, provisions and whatever else he needed under the eyes of the enemy, who dared not attack. It was in this siege that the Admiral lost his eye.

The other historical event is hotly disputed or firmly asserted, according to the penchant of your informer. But the Calvi tradition points an unshaken finger at a small stone ruin looking westward over the Mediterranean to the unplumbed distances, and says:

"In this house Christopher Columbus was born."

Since no one is able to prove that he was born elsewhere, and since Calvi is so sure, perhaps it's true. Anyhow, as Americans, we felt we'd like to look at the little place that claimed so great a son.

A good deal of Calvi is outside its old walls. Along

the bay there are long quays and a tangle of small streets leading up from them, with lengthwise streets of fair size. We left that portion for later, and following the Boulevard President Wilson, which is bordered by high hedges of prickly pear, reached the ramp, paved with small round stones, that leads up to the citadel.

It was a small, compact place, all folded up on itself. There were the narrow alleys, the tiny courts, the tall stone houses, many covered with stucco, so typical of these walled cities. Steep steps led from one level to another. Topmost of everything was the church, built in 1548 and a thing of beauty, in the form of a Greek cross, surmounted by an octagonal dome beneath which, supported on fine pillars, is a frieze of sculptured stone. Inside are various treasures, among the rest some very fine carved wood choir stalls, two or three Italian paintings, and, hidden behind a crimson curtain beside the altar, a crucifix that is said to be of miraculous origin. At any rate, history relates that in the last extremity of the dreadful siege of 1553, when Calvi withstood the united forces of France and Turkey, and even her women fought on the walls beside the men, the crucifix was carried round the walls in solemn procession in the heart of the night. Next morning the siege was lifted and the enemy disappeared.

The Baglioni tomb in this church has a claim to interest. In it is buried, among his ancestors and descendants, Libertas Baglioni, who in the year 1400 poignarded two of the citizens of Calvi who had arrogated to themselves tyrannical powers, and who, moreover, were on the point of selling the city to the Span-

iards, at that time making a try for Corsica. The hero drove his weapon into those treacherous hearts, calling out at the same moment, "Libertas, libertas!" From that instant his grateful townsfolk knew him by no other name.

A fort at the western side dominates that part of the city. Here we got a splendid outlook across the sea toward the French coast, and on a clear day it is possible to distinguish the mountains behind Nice. The evening haze hid them from us, but the glory of the sunset paid the loss in crimson and long golden streamers, with a mauve sea below. Between this fort and another, on whose top is a tower-dovecote where carrier pigeons are still raised for military purposes, is the old Governors' palace, now a barracks, but keeping its dignity and the soft patine of age.

We walked quite around the walls on a stone way sunk slightly below the escarpment, a matter of twenty minutes. On the sea side we found the little heap of stones, for it is not much more, that carries on one disintegrating wall a marble slab with this inscription:

"HERE WAS BORN IN 1441
CRISTOPHE COLOMBE,

IMMORTALIZED BY THE DISCOVERY OF THE NEW
WORLD, WHILE CALVI WAS UNDER GENOESE
DOMINION: DEAD AT VALLODOLID
MAY 20, 1500"

There could hardly be an eyrie better fitted for the cradle of such a seabird. It stands on the very edge

the flies were terrible. We heard from our friends, the owners of the Yellow Bug, that the other hotel was well run and comfortable, but its situation on the very edge of the dusty road is unfortunate. A square between the road and the sea is the haunt of noisy boys, moreover, who rush about yelling or crowd round the guests of the hotel, should these venture to sit on the little terrace in front. Calvi is not, in fact, a place to stay in. We left it next morning with no regret.

But as the train swung slowly round the wide curve of the bay it loomed behind us, rosy in the early light, wonderful, reflected in the calm water, a thing perfect and complete, rock and city and water enhancing each the other's beauty. There it has stood since 1268, and there it should stand forever.

In an hour we arrived at Ile Rousse, passing on the way the famous granite quarries, from which the stone base of the Vendôme Column in Paris has come. Here we said goodbye to the railway. It is a pleasant place, lying back of a beautiful little harbor with beach of rosy and golden sand, on which, marvellous to see, stood a row of bath-houses. Corsica is not given to such sybaritic luxury. Three small islands (Isoli Rossi) of red granite make a protective chain along one side of this harbor, and give the town its name. They are joined by bridges, and on the farthest out is a lighthouse, on the highest point, with one of the Genoese paratas a little lower down in a sort of cup. We left our baggage in the station and walked out to the lighthouse for the view and the effect of those precipitous ruddy rocks dropping sheer into the indigo water. We sat on the remotest

edge, bewitched by the swimming color, the loneliness, the stretch of the coastline, noble with headlands, and fascinated by the swoopings of a strange bird with a flash of rosy orange on its wings, that circled the rocks and dashed over the water in scores. I have seen no such bird anywhere else.

Ile Rousse was founded by the great patriot Paoli in 1758, and has been as completely Corsican in its sympathies as Calvi to the south and Saint Florent to the north were Genoese. He hoped much of it, thinking that it would in time rival both those cities in power. But after his defeat at the fatal bridge we had seen among the mountains of the Nebbio, its name was changed for awhile to Vaux, after the French conqueror, who occupied it. That appears to be all its history.

Its streets are wide, open to the sun and air. The great central square, Place Paoli, is magnificently shaded by immense plane trees. In the center is a fountain surmounted by a bust of the hero. Round about are some fine buildings, notably the large covered market that resembles a Greek temple, with its massive white pillars and pediments. This faces across the place to the sea. Much of the right side of the square is taken up by the lovely old château Piccioni, now a hotel, and said to be a good one. It is surrounded by a garden full of palms and flowers.

There is a very broad avenue with four rows of plane trees as large as those in the square that leads back from the town for half a mile toward the mountains, along which we walked to its ending at a group of family tombs and a small pasture full of scarlet poppies and

purple thistles in the midst of which wandered a small, disconsolate donkey who seemed to care for neither. A country road led off to one side, and up the mountain in a series of switchbacks to the Monastery of Cerbara, whose white walls gleamed against a green background. All the interim was filled with olive orchards and cultivated fields.

We took our dinner at a hotel recommended by the Touring Club of France and were in luck, for not only was the meal good, well served and the diningroom charming, shaded by green blinds kept closed, but there were no flies. Two good hotels in one town—we were amazed!

We took our coffee in the shady square among the rest of the people of the town, who were scattered about under the pleasant trees in little groups. We had made a bargain with a garage man on the square to take us to Saint-Florent, and when we went at two to start, according to the agreement, behold, the car was ready, and so was the man. You need to spend some months in Corsica fully to grasp the miracle of such a happening.

We felt we had made a mistake not to plan to stay in this town. We might go farther and fare worse. I remembered that it was here that the Friesekes had fallen under the Corsican spell. But it was too late, as we had written to Saint-Florent engaging rooms. Always a mistake, that, we told each other, as we were whirled away.

We had a little less than fifty kilometres to go, but during that distance we passed through country entirely different from anything we had yet seen in the island.

Amazing Corsica! We left behind us quickly enough the vineyards and the orchards, all the rich green of that fertile valley, running along close to the sea, crossing several streams and passing an occasional lovely village hill-hung or with its feet in the water, and then we entered a wilderness called the Desert of Agriates.

And it's a real desert. Neither Arizona nor New Mexico can better it for savage loneliness and grandeur. Gray, broken and gigantic rocks are tossed in the wildest confusion over a hilly and barren land, gray too, in spite of the rough desert herbage and the scattered bits of green where some dampness left over from the rains lets the grass live a precarious existence. No one at all lives in this place, though there are here and there a few cultivated spots where a spring gives moisture. It is filled with game, however, and a great field for hunters. To be sure, there are less than twenty thousand acres of this desert, but so far as effect goes it might extend for hundreds of miles. We ran through it, turning and twisting to climb the sharp elevations, surrounded by the grim and desolate waste, where the sun was reflected quivering from the gray rocks, for what seemed a long while; then suddenly we climbed a high hill, and left it abruptly behind.

From the top of this hill we looked down on a green extent of valley, and two rivers, the Aliso, immediately below, and the Fiuminali a few kilometres further on, emptying into the long blue gulf at Saint-Florent. We swept toward the town at a fine pace, ran close to the gulf between rows of small tamarisk trees, and drew up with a flourish before the Hotel de l'Europe, the one hotel

in the town. We paid our chauffeur and thanked him; a noncommittal young man who did not appear to realize that in making the trip without a single hitch and under two and a half hours he was setting a record we had not so far seen equalled.

Saint-Florent is one of the prettiest places in Corsica. Charmingly placed at the extremity of the long gulf, with a sea wall bordered by young plane trees, and a great square shaded by old ones, it has a green and pleasant aspect. Like so many Corsican towns it occupies a peninsula, broad at the base and narrowing and rising toward the point, where a small citadel consisting of an old château and a few other buildings, partially surrounded by a wall, makes a fine profile against the sky. Between the open square and the citadel lies the small town, built on either side of the one street, that leads from the square to a large paved plaza, where we found the post office, the mairie, a shop or two, the church, with an interesting square tower surmounted by a pointed spire, and stuccoed dwelling houses. Little narrow passages led to the quay, the jetty, and the very short boulevard running beside the sea wall. There were tiny courts, arched entrances, slanting, time-stained tiled roofs. It was all tremendously attractive and picturesque, but—dirty! Over that pretty wall the Saint-Florentines throw their garbage and their rubbish. As the water seldom sweeps the rocks on which this falls, it lies there, rotting, smelling, attracting hordes of flies. In fact, the flies of Saint-Florent deserve a paragraph to themselves.

We developed a sort of swimming movement of the

arms, brushing our way through them all day long. With the first crack of dawn they were up and ready, and so, necessarily, were we. Our windows had a delectable view over the gulf—but unfortunately over the sea wall too! It was quite impossible to work in those rooms, since writing is a sedentary occupation. Had we been practicing for a ballet or as whirling dervishes, it would have been better. Our meals were served at the end of a long diningroom in almost total darkness, but even there the flies were busy and effective. One afternoon J. M. came toward me, his arms waving to the rhythm of a feeble little song he had made, which ran this way:

Gin a body meet a body
Comin' through the flies,
Need a body tell a body
In *Corse* they take the prize?

Saint-Florent dates from 1440, and evidently takes a pride in maintaining old customs. But it is so quaint, so friendly and so pretty, that you forgive it and can't help liking it. Even though the mosquitoes drift in from the marshy land above the mouth of the river, and you have to walk miles to find a good beach to bathe from, and it's impossible to get a light strong enough to read by after sunset. But we couldn't let affection rule us. Instead of the week or ten days we had meant to stay there, we decided that three would be quite enough.

Our hotel occupied the town side of the square and faced on the fountain. Here the life of the place circled. Morning and evening came the old men or boys leading cows, horses, donkeys, mules, sheep and goats, to drink.

Not that either of us ever caught a goat drinking. They simply stood about looking bored and supercilious. All day long there was a procession of women and girls with water jars to fill. Children played in the big stone basin, dabbling their hands in the water, sailing chips and small home-made boats. The one automobile owned in the town, and it was our inn-keeper that owned it, was washed here, a long, meticulous performance that kept three men busy for hours.

If you wanted to meet anyone in Saint-Florent, it was at the fountain you met him or her. Long gossipings held groups of women together, filled jar on head or the week's wash sitting beside them on the ground, while they waited their turn to get to the trough. The men smoked pipes or carried a table and a couple of chairs over from the café across the street to discuss politics over an Italian Vermouth or a cup of coffee. Here the diligence stopped on its way over from Bastia and onward to the Cap Corse. Here boys played *boule* with stones, lacking balls. It was the club, the playground, the business office of the town.

Back from the town a little cobbled road led to a ruined village, a pathetic huddle of stone buildings whose roofs had fallen in and whose walls were crumbling. Stains of fire still clung to the ancient stones. Outside steps led up across the front of many of these little ruins, to end only in the sky, ruined courtyards and roofed stone passages served to shelter goats or store hay. Centuries ago Nebbio had been a flourishing place, then the Saracens had come—and since that visit it has looked as it does now.

But almost in the center of this deserted village, on a plateau, stands a cathedral in perfect preservation, an exquisite building. Built of the golden-hued stone quarried near by, and known as Saint-Florent stone, it is a simple oblong without a tower. But so beautiful are its proportions, so consummately are the window spaces placed, so fine is the great portal, so delicate yet so sufficient the carving over doors and windows and running in a broad band under the eaves, that it makes one catch an ecstatic breath. We were told that it was built by the Pisans.

Inside is cherished the mummy of Saint-Florent himself, still clad in battle harness, as well as a black statue of Christ. But since the church is only open occasionally, on certain feast days, we had to forego a look at these objects.

Beyond Nebbio there are trails leading up alongside the little brooks that run into the Fiuminali. Broad and beautifully cultivated fields give way to olive orchards, then to broken and hilly country where willows grow and the grass lies thick. Olives here too, and suddenly you see a great glow of rose color—it is a clump of wild oleander. This lovely shrub, or almost tree, is plentiful here, and nowhere else in Corsica. It hugs the brooksides and the swampy meadows, and being in full flower just at that season, it was a feast for the eyes. Farther on yet, the hills begin to point up sharply, quarries are cut deep into their sides, and on the slopes meadows quite overgrown with the most pungent of the mint, sage and marjoram families give the air a zest that fairly lifts you off your feet. Here we had the

luck to see a hoopoe, the rare oriental bird that visits Corsica to breed: a biggish brown bird, with a great crest on its head, raised as it flew past us.

We took only one long tramp while we were at Saint-Florent, and it turned out to be a whole lot longer than we had supposed.

We had been told of another gorge, the *Défile de Lancone*, said to have an even wilder splendor than the Inzecca, though it was much shorter. We somehow got the notion that the trip there and back was about fifteen kilometres, or ten miles. A good afternoon's walk, leaving right after the noonday meal.

Off we started blithely, on our last day in the town, first along the avenue of tamarisks, those pale-green, frondy trees, wet and sticky to the touch, that seem to soak the sea water into their delicate needles, then turned just before the bridge across the Aliso, on a road running up the fertile valley watered by that clear, brisk stream. It was a charming upward-sloping walk through lovely fields and orchards to the village of Olleta, which is decoratively hung on the breast of a steep mountainside, with broad green fields in front. In these fields, surrounded by huge elm trees, stood an old church, and the town itself has an outlook that in any other country but Corsica would make it a haunt of tourists. It is built on a series of terraces, with little pebble-paved paths connecting them, has some beautiful towers and houses of more than ordinary picturesqueness, gray stone and pierced with long narrow windows, with high stoops and double flights of steps. A considerable industry with silk

worms occupies many of its inhabitants, and there is also a cheese factory that produces a form of Roquefort.

Beyond Olleta the road mounted sharply, first through a magnificent forest of chestnuts, then out around the shoulder of a great mountain slope, with splendid outlooks on the valleys of the Aliso and Fiuminali, the gulf, the sea, and tumbled ranges southward. But we began to feel that the tramp was extending considerably, and certainly we must still be a long way from the pass of Stefano, beyond which was our expected gorge.

However, whoever turned back simply because the distance promised to be greater than was looked for? Not we, anyhow. We could hurry coming homeward, since it would be steadily downhill.

On then! And after another good hour's work, we got to a village we specially wanted to see, whose lovely name is Olmeta-di-Tuda. Here Henry Seton Merriman laid the scene of his book, "The Isle of Unrest."

And here, to be sure, was the château, just as he described it, and quite unlike any other building in Corsica. There are two round tower wings with pointed tops built of warm red brick, joined by a central stuccoed portion. It is a spreading, hospitable place, surrounded by fine oaks and elms and evergreens, airy, sunny, hung with vines, with lovely lawns about it, and all enclosed behind a beautiful old wall, mossy and stained. Round the outside of this wall runs a paved road, very old and worn. On the valley side the château has a gorgeous view to the sea, on the other sides the quaint little village is crowded. Climbing roses poured over the wall, round which we walked. It was the one and only real home we

saw on the island, a place cherished and sweet and comfortable, that won my love at once.

The road went up very steeply beyond this village, making almost straight for the pass, which we reached at last, realizing that we must have come at least twelve kilometres already. Here four roads met, and a fountain marked the meeting. The view was a fine one but we had not time to linger over it. Down we sped, to where narrowing cañon walls told us the gorge must lie.

It did, and it was worth our long tramp to see it. Two mountains are divided by a very narrow deep cut, precipitous, a thing of torn rock and sheer descents. The road is hewn out of the mountain side about midway of the distance from the top to where the wild river boils below. We walked down this mile-long gorge to where we got an outlook on the Tyrrhenian Sea, over the *Etang* of Biguglia, and there hung awhile over the wall that guards the narrow road, which runs under arches cut in the living rock at times, from the terrific descent. The river is the Bevinco, the two mountains, Pinzali and Rotto. The height of the cliffs from the crest above to the bottom is not much under two thousand feet.

Then we turned home, well-pleased at ourselves for having stuck to it. The return was mostly a jog-trot, and even so we got back a half-hour late for Madame's excellent dinner. We had covered a trifle more than twenty miles since lunch, and our legs ached, but what did that matter beside the gallery of pictures we had brought back, to dwell within "that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude," and of shared memories.

CHAPTER XIV

CHASING AN HOUR TO PINO

NEXT morning, an hour later than the scheduled time, the bus that was to take us up the Cap to Pino rattled furiously across the square. The patronne had been on the lookout for it. She gave the driver a sign as he drove by, to which he nodded, whereupon she turned smiling to us.

"It is well. He has two places and will take you."

We were relieved. For the bus, which was a small open stage, looked crammed. Taking Madame's advice we followed it up into the village to where it stood beside the post office. Perhaps it was as well we did, for a determined person in uniform was trying to induce the chauffeur to let him have one of the two empty places in the car, that had evidently been released only that moment.

He was most indignant.

"What am I to do, I ask you? I have important affairs. How can I get where I must be if I do not mount with you? It is ridiculous, unheard of! It is of the most intensely annoying," he asserted, loudly, glaring at us as we approached.

But we climbed calmly in. The chauffeur continued to work over his mail bags, and the rest of the passengers looked on with deep interest.

There was no doubt but that the car was full when we

got in. It was a Citroen, and it held nine, with the chauffeur, squeezed like peas in a bursting pod. Narrow and hard and upright as a New England spinster were the seats, and the fact that every human being has a pair of knees had been completely ignored. Take them or leave them, the car didn't care.

Behind us we dragged a trailer for the baggage and the mail sacks, packed as solid as the car itself.

The road along the western edge of the Cap Corse resembles a long rope with Will Rogers at one end of it, doing his durndest. We followed its incredible loopings and twistings, ups and downs, crossing narrow bridges, hugging terrifying precipices, at the best speed the driver could wring from his engine. We never saw more than a couple of hundred yards into the future because of the cliff walls that shoved sheer bulk of upright stone between us and it. One instant we looked into a yawning gulf with a river at the bottom, or a bit of the sea, or a green fertile valley, the next we tore toward a mass of overhanging rock that only stepped aside in the nick of time. We scraped round a wall, then on two wheels circled the outer edge of nothing. We skidded down, we ground up. And the shriek of our siren preceded us, echoing from the rocky heights.

Hanging on to our hats and hoping we wouldn't meet anything, we stared through tears at the view, which, what we got untangled of it, was marvellous. We were so tightly packed that we couldn't fly out as we swung round the sharp turns, but all swayed with a beautiful harmony from side to side, grasping each other's or the car's anatomy. And the chauffeur, bending over his

wheel, looked ahead under his visored cap, and stepped on the gas.

If you picture Corsica as a loosely clenched hand with the forefinger, far too small in proportion, sticking straight up, you get a rough notion of its outline. The forefinger is the Cap Corse. It is not a flat affair, however, but a high mountain ridge that drops precipitously into the sea, except where rivers have dug a way through and widened out valleys here and there. Most of the road is cut out of the side of the precipice, with a series of bridges across endless fiords, ravines and the streams themselves, but generally following the indentations of the coast, which is more like a fringe than anything to be called a shoreline. For the greater part of the time we were considerably above the sea, that took on a more vivid hue, more peacock freakings, for every yard we hung above it. Once in a way we got down to sea level, but only to mount again.

Our siren and the racket the car made, with its trailer bounding and thumping behind, fortunately advertised our approach. We passed anxious-faced men holding off the road as best they could small flocks of sheep or goat, or a loaded donkey or mule that had scrambled up on the impossible edge of the road, with whatever it had on top or behind it, to stare at us with twisted neck and frightened eyes, while its driver perched on the coping of the wall. With the unshakable good manners of the Corsican peasant these men or women called a greeting, raised a hand in salute, gave us a smile.

And the river of beauty flowed past in an endless stream, now tossing up some peculiarly gorgeous outline

of tawny rock or tree covered slope, the white whirl of a torrent, a curved yellow beach on which breaking waves sketched a line of infinite grace, a sudden blaze of golden broom or the tall candelabra of a yucca clear against the sky.

Amazed at all this fury of progress, I asked the driver, behind whom I sat, why all the hurry. He in turn was amazed.

"But, Madame! Do you not understand that we are an hour late? And I carry the mails. I have to make it up."

Incredible words. Make up lost time in Corsica! This driver, in his linen duster, his chauffeur's cap, thin, intense, a speed devil, could he be Corsican! He bore no resemblance to those quiet, corduroy-clad, café-loving drivers we had known till now.

"Is Monsieur a Corse?" I asked him.

But just then, topping a hill, we let out a mad howl and plunged desperately down six or seven switchbacks. If he answered, I did not hear.

Our first stop was at the village of Nonza, and a wonderful sight is Nonza. It has climbed straight up a precipice of black rock that looks like a horn thrust up between land and sea. On the very top of this horn is a round Genoese tower built in the XVI century. The houses overhang the sea which lies far below. Tiny terraces have been cut out of the rock clear down to the water, filled with earth, and planted with vegetables, even with vines. On the edge of the sea is a small huddle of fishermen's huts, joined to the village proper by a zig-zag path like a ladder.

The highroad runs between Nonza on its basalt peak to the left, and a fair fine church with broad steps at the right. From the road a ramp broken by shallow steps leads up to the town.

There are twin springs of clear and never-failing water in Nonza, and a legend tells the story of a young African girl who became a Christian, and lived there, many ages ago. The Saracens came to attack the town, and succeeded in forcing an entrance. But for once they were on no raiding expedition. They had heard of the apostate, and it was her they sought. They killed her, and flung the mutilated body on the ground. From her breasts there sprung forthwith two gushing springs of water, which have flowed ever since. Not only is the water clear and sparkling, but it has healing and health-giving properties, so it is said.

Leaving Nonza we left too the comparative breadth and smoothness of the national route, taking a secondary road just broad enough for the car, and with rather rudimentary notions of grading. Far, far up against the sky stood a beautiful white tower. We were apparently making for it.

On the way to it we unexpectedly found ourselves in a small village that had kept hidden in a cleft of the mountain, a lovely thing of pale-hued stucco houses surrounded by live oaks and with terraced gardens spreading out like a lap of emerald velvet. We delivered the mail bag here, then backed, found room to turn, did so and retraced our way a bit to a branch road, even more rudimentary than the one we were following. This we took, and scrambled madly up to the white tower.



Evisa, a typical mountain village

A surprising tower. It belonged to no church, and stood beside a tiny group of three or four houses, in the midst of a little field, tall, exquisite, with a great clock that even as we waited for two of our passengers who were getting off here to collect their baggage, sounded the hour in deep sweet strokes. Why it should have been here in this lonely spot we could not imagine. It would have been a splendid ornament to any city, and here it stood, surrounded by the *maquis* covered hills, overlooking the distant sea, marking the unnoted hours, ringing its sweet bells, century after century.

A shepherd with a donkey met the two people who had left us. Their collection of bags and parcels was loaded on the little beast, and off he went, followed by the shepherd, the man and the woman, taking a small trail that disappeared in a few minutes round a mass of rock. We turned on the square before the tower, and plunged back.

From then on we couldn't have missed a single mountain village. We saw them all, and we were glad we did. Most of the people who make the tour of the Cap Corse keep on the national route, which is sufficiently fine, but they miss a great deal. Each small place had its individual charm, its special grace. Prosperous and cheerful they are, these villages of the Cap. Pale pink stucco is the favorite with them, or cream or faint green or blue. Always with their great church in the middle, the small houses cluster about her like a flock of chickens round a hen. Often too there is a fine villa with gardens, built by an American. An American? Yes, but from the southern continent. Usually these so-called Americans are re-

turned Corsicans who have made their fortune in the west, and come home again to enjoy it. The Cap Corse is noted for the adventurous turn of its children and their flair for the sea. Where the rest of the island stays put, Cap Corse sails the wide world over and brings its prizes home.

Still we tore onward, up and down and round and round. The higher we went, the higher the sea rose on the horizon, ruffled by the wind to a deep indigo. At last we seemed definitely to be heading back to the main route. We stopped once more to give a mailbag to a man waiting at the foot of a long irregular flight of stone steps which mounted and disappeared over the crest of a hill. Then we looped downward, faster and faster, struck a straight piece of level road with a sharp hill ahead—and with a tremendous crack, a wild lurch and grinding crash, stopped . . . all slumped down at one side.

Everyone was out on the road in an instant. The driver, arms akimbo, stared at a wheel, some twenty feet behind, lying in the dust. The rest of us stared at the lop-sided car, which, ludicrous and helpless, seemed to stare back.

The axel had broken, and there we were. Sheer luck to have the accident happen where it did—if it had occurred on one of those turns? You wondered.

All about was a desert of boulders and dry herbage. Ahead the road mounted to a narrow pass. Not a village showed its white cluster of buildings, its spire or tower. The world was empty of life except for us, and in the sky a circling gull that wheeled above us, turning its

head curiously to look down, first from one bright eye, and then the other.

"Eh bien, so we walk?" one of the passengers, a big smiling Frenchman in knickerbockers, with a large camera hanging over one shoulder, remarked cheerfully.

"There is, Messieurs et Mesdames, nothing else to do," replied the chauffeur, removing his hands from his hips, and producing a pack of cigarettes from one pocket. "As for your baggage, leave that in the car. No one will disturb it, and this afternoon I will have it brought down. Pino is about three kilometres from here—just keep to the road."

It was a good walk, though it proved to be nearer seven than three kilometres. But as soon as we had got over the small pass the road kept going down, and was beautifully shaded and cool. We could see not only Pino, but another, larger village, farther on, separated from Pino by many great headlands thrusting seaward. It was pleasant to be out of that jolting, rattling car, with the silence of the woods about us. We soon left the rest of the party out of sight. How natural, after all, again to be walking into a place!

Maybe a couple of kilometres beyond where we had broken down we came upon a small chapel, or a large shrine, elevated well above the road. A particularly graceful figure of the Virgin stood behind a sheet of glass in a great gray embrasure of rock, with a cross above. Trees bowered the whole. Below the shrine was an inscription cut in the rock testifying that it had been raised there by a certain bishop of Ajaccio, in thankfulness for having escaped death here in a runaway,

and commending future travelers to the protection of Mary. Evidently that shrine had not been dedicated in vain.

We reached the national route and Pino at the same moment, and asked a small boy the way to the Hotel Lucca. He instantly offered to take us there, and preceded us down a long and very crooked flight of steps to a small square surrounded by pink walls, pierced on one side by an arch. Through this we went, and found ourselves at the hotel.

A pretty little place, neat as wax, with a garden at one side, terraced of course, where all is terraced. Under a bit of awning and several thick-leaved fig trees, stood a table covered with a white cloth and set for six people.

Madame Lucca received us with voluble greetings, listened sympathetically to the account of our mishap, told us we had long been expected and that *déjeûner* was ready. But would we not like a jug of hot water first, in our rooms?

This was a surprise, for the question had never before been addressed to us in Corsica. So we washed, and went out to the table under the shade of the figs, and looked down from our seats there at the view.

A wonderful, an amazing view. But just then Madame brought us a great bowl of *bouillabaisse*, and we lost all interest in the glory of nature. We had been busy some time with that delectable dish before the rest of the party arrived, looking hot and weary. The chauffeur came last of all, and sat down with the family, telling his own version of the accident. He had stopped at the post office to telephone, and announced that at four another car

would come from Bastia and those who were going further could then resume their journey.

Meanwhile we sat, relaxed and content, sipping the coffee with which our meal ended, and really taking in the charming scene. The bright, attractive village is built on a series of ledges that rise all the way from the sea to about halfway up the great cliff, which curves about the turquoise water of a small bay, ending north and south in two splendid, tree-covered headlands. It is a most decorative village, with several great towers, both round and square, a fine church in pure Italian style, a lovely old château under liveoaks and olives, an ancient monastery close to the sea, where a picturesque settlement of stone cottages, very old and worn, lay beside a small golden beach, squeezed between masses of rock. Across the sea the French coast is occasionally visible, the mountains behind Nice showing faintly in a clear morning. Now we saw only the measureless blue water.

Our lunch culminated with a delicious caramel custard, or "upset cream" as the French call it. It was the first made dessert we had eaten in several moons, and it was welcomed with delight, for we both liked caramel custard.

Pino was to be our last abiding place in Corsica. We meant to stop there a week, then cross the Cap by way of the Sainte-Lucie pass, directly back of Pino, and so on from Bastia by the one good steamer in the island service, to Nice. J. M. decided that he would send to our Paris bank for money.

"We don't want to run any risk of being short," he remarked. "Had enough of that. And it usually takes less than a week to get it."

"And even if it takes a day or two more it won't matter, in this heavenyminded place," I agreed.

Our rooms were pleasant, opening on the view. There was an upper balcony at one side where we could have our early breakfast, and where we could lounge or read. It was all very comfortable.

I was looking at the view from our window when suddenly I heard a grunt. Leaning out I gazed down upon the head of a pig. It seemed to be occupying the apartment on the ground floor, immediately beneath. Even as I looked, another pig's head joined the first. I saw that the square of ground in front was a chickenyard, with a bunch of fowls and a large red and green rooster.

Still, I hoped we would be comfortable. We were used to pigs and chickens by now, and the yard looked very clean and neat.

We had opened the green blinds of our room, and were getting unpacked, the chauffeur having brought in our things. Madame Lucca entered, and gave a small scream.

"Ah, but it is better not to open the jalousies," she exclaimed. "Otherwise the flies . . ." and grabbing a towel she began to beat the air.

It was the only way. So long as we kept the blinds tightly closed, the flies did not come in. Open them but a couple of inches, and in the creatures flowed. Then we had to flap them out with towels, and close the shutters once more. Air came in all right, but practically no light. We lived in darkness, and gave up hope of seeing our way, or our clothes, or our faces in the mirror. We also gave up the hope of doing any work. And again we wondered why in all Corsica there is no such thing as a

fly screen, nor so much as a yard of mosquito netting. I had asked in several places, describing what I wanted. Heads were shaken:

"But we have some unbleached muslin that perhaps Madame could use for the purpose she suggests?"

No, Madame couldn't.

Next morning at a quarter to five the rooster went into action. He crowed twelve times without intermission in a voice that must be the twin to that which inspired Rostand to write *Chanticleere*. I could easily imagine the sun fairly bounding out of bed at that summons. After the dozen crows there fell a blissful silence. I turned over hopefully and composed myself to sleep.

And then that fiend of a bird crowed another twelve. Altogether, with brief intermissions, he crowed fifty-four times. I discovered later that this was by no means his record, and once he actually passed the sixty mark.

I spoke to Madame about the rooster. She smiled.

"Yes, in Corsica we call the cock the 'get-you-up,'" she replied.

"But we do not desire to get up at half past four," I pointed out.

"Ah, no, Madame. Of course, that is a mere pleasantry. Madame must not think of getting up at such an hour."

And there she left it.

Yes, there were disadvantages at the Hotel Lucca. But after all, the advantages balanced them. It was a clean and cheerful place. The cooking was wonderful. Madame constantly surprised us with new dishes. There was a lobster cooked with rice—and once we had a dish

of the most delicate, delicious fritters as an entrée, with a curious, fascinating flavor. What were they? we asked. They were fritters made of squash blossoms!

And then, that view! At night the moon still shone, filling that terraced cup whose sides sloped so graciously, with a radiance, distinct and pale. Owls cried from the woods, a double note, hollow, metallic, eerie. White owls with brownish feathers in great whorls round their staring eyes. And the sunsets, done in all the more magnificent shades, involving sky and sea in ineffable splendour. Madame would mount to the terrace while one was in progress, smile upon it with a proprietary air, and observe:

"We have a very fine *coucher du soleil* this evening. This view! Madame, I ask you, where else in this world can you sit on a balcony like this and enjoy such a prospect?"

We reassured her. Nowhere.

During the days we took long walks. The roads were shady, for liveoaks flourished. And in the crevices of the rocks grew quantities of little clove pinks, filling the air with spicy fragrance. The road was deceptive as to distances. We would see a village that looked to be perhaps five kilometres away, and find it was four times that distance because of the convolutions of the coast line.

There was Morsiglia. As the crow flies we could almost have fired a pistol and hit the old square Pisan tower that dominated it. But it took two hours to get there. There was a religious procession going on when we reached it, winding down from a church high up the

cliff side, under the checkered shadows of the trees, stopping at one chapel after another, small white or yellow buildings with their doors flung open and lights on altars within. All the bells rang in a tumult of sound. We stopped to watch it. First two priests and four boys, in full canonicals, a crucifix, another, then four men in red and white robes over their ordinary clothes, that showed when the wind blew the folds of the robes aside, who up-bore a canopy under which strode another priest who carried under scarlet and lace trappings the vessel with the Host. Behind came yet other priests and after these the villagers, in Sunday best. It was Corpus Christi day.

Sometime or other on these walks we always managed to climb down to the sea for a swim. No easy task because it was only occasionally that the precipitous wall gave a passage one could take without risking a broken neck. Sometimes we found a little sandy beach. More often a flat rock was all, the water fathoms deep where it broke off. But the clearness of that water! And the wild loneliness, as of a world unvisited, untouched.

There are a great many Pisan and Genoese towers along this part of the coast. Some are watch towers, others were built for refuge, and are much larger and often square. The entrance is high up, some fifteen or twenty feet, above solid walls. In the old times ladders were kept handy, and there was water and there were provisions stored inside. When the alarm was given the citizens all rushed for the nearest tower, pulled up the ladder as soon as the last was inside, and stayed snug and safe till the raid was over or the pirates chased away.

Today several of the square towers have been partially reconstructed and made into livable houses of a most striking appearance.

Right behind Pino and high on the very crest of the ridge that divides the Cap Corse from its beginning to its end, stands one of the round towers, visible for many miles.

This is the famous Seneca's Tower, and here, according to local tradition, the Roman philosopher spent the seven years of his exile. But the tradition is utterly without foundation. The tower dates back no farther than the early XV century, and is probably of Pisan construction. During the Middle Ages it was the stronghold of feudal lords. Seneca probably never got very far from Aleria, on the East coast, where the most considerable Roman settlement lay.

We climbed up there, one afternoon, when the air was particularly clear, for the view. First we followed the route leading to the pass of Sainte-Lucie, a winding and interesting road that leads past some old family tombs, a roadside shrine, a farmhouse or two, and then up the mountain through *maquis*, with lots to look at. Just this side of the pass we turned off on a little road that went to an old monastery with stained white walls, turning there into a small footpath that scrambled almost directly upward through brush and small trees, only to disappear on the rocks near the top. We hoisted and climbed on, the tower out of sight part of the time, so steep was the ascent, and finally reached the small plateau on which it stands.

The two sides of Corsica with the Tuscan sea to the

east and the Mediterranean to the west, lay before us. Elba floated, like a mirage, on the former. Northward stretched the mountains of the Cap Corse, and the serrated edge of the westward shoreline was visible for a long way. South more mountains, and all about the green and fertile valleys tucked everywhich way between the steep slopes and dropping down to both seas. White villages were scattered over this country, church spires and towers rose above tree tops. A tawny glow lay over everything.

When we got back to the road we went on up the short remaining way to the top of the pass. A great ridge of stone stands like a wall between the east and west slopes. This has been cut through, leaving just way enough for a car. Carved midway of the passage on the living rock was an inscription running about like this:

"The last words of a Corsican patriot, dying many thousand leagues from his home land were that it was his hope, together with that of many of his compatriots, that some day a road would be constructed across the Pass Sainte-Lucie, for the benefit of all the Cap Corse."

On the Pino side of the cut, under magnificent liveoaks, stands an old chapel dedicated to Sainte-Lucie and most subtly tinted by time to a patina like ancient ivory.

There were other walks, south and north, to other villages. Even when it began to rain, which it did on the fourth day of our stay, we went on walking. There had been no rain except the heavy shower that fell the night before we went to Bonifacio in many weeks, and what a blessing it was. How the thirsty land drank it, and the air sweetened and cooled. We expanded in the

dampness, only realizing then how tense the long drought had made nerves and muscles. More than ever we enjoyed Madame Lucca's wonderful meals. All but the constantly repeated caramel custards, which we discovered to be her only idea of a dessert, and which arrived twice a day, perfectly made, cool, delicious—but palling. We didn't want to hurt her feelings, so we tried to create the impression that we had eaten some at least—and the cat helped us there. A French couple who had arrived soon after we did were, as we had been, delighted when this custard was served at their first meal. "How excellently well made," they declared. We agreed, adding that practice makes perfect. They soon understood the remark.

"Crème Renversée" became a countersign among the four of us, applied to anything superfluous or unvarying, and we would burst into a little cheer when, trembling in the center of its dish, it arrived at the end of the meal.

One day Madame scalded her hand, a nasty scald. She showed it to me, and she was very bitter.

"Madame, here am I, a woman who works all day, from six in the morning to eleven at night. I am the mother of a family. I lead a virtuous life, Madame. I am a woman who has always worked, who works unceasingly, who carries on her family, who sends her children to a good school, who does not complain. And to me this thing arrives! There are persons in this village, Madame, of whom as much good cannot be said, and are they thus wounded, thus made to suffer? No. I tell you, Madame, it strikes at one's faith. Yes—I ask



Canari, between Saint-Florent and Pino, Cap Corse

myself, what is the explanation? There is no answer. Madame, it shakes the faith."

True it was that Madame worked, but she had nothing on her maid in that respect. Lucie was the maid's name, a child of twelve, and small for her age, and Lucie never rested.

Soon after that confounded chanticleer waked me—and everything and everyone else—Lucie was out with a pail, feeding the pigs, the chickens, leading the goat to its pasture, sweeping the terrace, killing the chicken or rabbit destined to provide our meals for the day, bringing up a basket of green stuff from the garden. At seven it was Lucie who thumped at the door and left a can of hot water, and a half hour later she was setting the tray of our coffee and bread, nicely toasted, on the table of the balcony. Then she made the beds and tidied the rooms. She scraped and washed vegetables. She rushed endlessly from one task to another, bright-eyed, alert, singing to herself in a small treble the chansons of the children of France—*Mon Ami Pierrot*, *Sur le Pont d'Avignon* and many more. She it was who waited on us and the other guests at luncheon and dinner, depositing the used plates on the ground in a pile till she could gather them up and make off to the kitchen with them, staggering under the big dishes. She poured our coffee, filled the tiny glasses with Eau de Vie de Corse. She was wonderful and delightful, and oh, so serious!

I asked her why she wasn't going to school.

"But, Madame, I finished with school two years ago. For a year I worked in our own house, and now I have been here for a year. I am twelve, Madame."

It was as though one should say, "Behold me, I am a hundred, full of years and responsibility."

It was toward the end of the week that we discovered that there was but one boat a week from Bastia to Nice, and that it sailed the very day on which our letter, with the needed money, if it came exactly on the dot, would arrive. If by some chance it missed catching the boat train to Marseilles, we wouldn't get it for another day or two, possibly three. And anyhow we should have to put off leaving for a whole week. And we needed to get to Nice before that time.

It was blithering. We wouldn't know till after luncheon on the day we had to leave, and we should have to leave the instant after. That meant I had to pack everything, only perhaps to unpack again. And we were getting restless. We didn't want to sit in darkness any more, or else be battling with flies. We were tired of the rooster, and there were times when the pigs, though silent, made themselves noticeable.

The morning came, and we got everything ready. We put on our traveling clothes, and sat down to our luncheon. The patron himself was to take us over the pass to Bastia; it was the only labor he ever permitted himself. His car was ready, and the entire family was all agog as to whether or not we were going to get that letter.

We finished our meal and sat over the coffee and the cigarettes, our eyes fixed on the battered stone steps that led down from the post office, a couple of terraces above our level. Then Lucie came speeding down them, running toward us. Her eyes sparkled.

"They come," she cried.

They came. First the patron, then the facteur, his case over his shoulder, then a number of boys and an old man or two. The patron called to us from afar:

"Monsieur le facteur says that there is for you a registered letter."

Grave and important, the facteur advanced. He threw upon the table with a gesture full of drama, the locked case. He unlocked and opened it. It contained one letter—the letter. We took it, signed his book, gave him a fifty centimes piece, he smiled, bowed, wished us a *bon voyage*, and withdrew. The small crowd scattered.

Madame Lucca and Lucie kissed me and shook the hand of J. M., with a multitude of kind wishes. The patron sounded the horn of his car. A blond boy appeared and carried our bags up the score or so of steps we must climb to reach the waiting car, and we were off.

The run to Bastia was little more than three hours long, first over the ridge by the pass, then down in long hairpin turns to the east coast. At one point on this descent three mules got in front of us, and nothing the patron could do would get them off the road. Mile after mile they galloped frantically ahead. At last another road took off at a slant, and fortunately they chose that. "Pigs," remarked the patron.

The east coast is almost straight, the road was good, and the day was a clear, cool one. We passed beautifully cultivated ground, barren slopes, fine villas. To our left the sea lay breathless, motionless. A perfect time for crossing.

Even Bastia seemed clean. But then we didn't go to

the old town. However, as we sauntered up a street, wondering where we should eat dinner, we saw ahead of us two familiar figures. The French couple, who had left Pino the day before.

"Crème renversée," we called.

They whirled round, saw us and laughed. We all had dinner together in the pleasant garden of a hotel, and then they saw us off. We steamed slowly away, waving, and being waved at. It was pleasant.

The sun set over Corsica, lights came out along the coast. Elba and the other Italian islands loomed faintly on the eastern sea line. We might have been on a lake, so serene it was.

We were not sorry to go, for we had stayed long enough, perhaps a little too long. The dry, hot season was beginning in earnest. But we had had a rich, interesting experience. Corsica has almost everything to make it worth a visit. Unsurpassable scenery, wonderful flowers, wonderful climate. A people intelligent, spirited and picturesque. It is still unspoiled, unsophisticated, unique. Careless of modern ways and comforts, certainly, but reflecting a past that has not only not been forgotten, but is still alive. It holds something of the Middle Ages, tempered, but not too much so, by the present day. In one or two of its cities you can be perfectly comfortable, and the discomforts of the rest are a slight price to pay for what is given in exchange.

Sometime, of course, Corsica is going to be a haunt of tourists, and it will be all tidied up and covered with tours and hotels and conveniences. But it won't then

be Corsica, beautiful and unusual as it must always be. We were glad we had seen it in its unimproved state, uncomfortable, unsanitary even, but with a wild attraction, a spirit of its own, hardy, careless of money, content with its simplicities, proud, poor—and beautiful.

THE END

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